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Woodfill of the regulars :
a true story of adventure
from the Arctic to the

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WOODFILL OF THE REGULARS

BOOKS BY

LOWELL THOMAS

WOODFILL OF THE REGULARS
RAIDERS OF THE DEEP
COUNT LUCKNER, THE SEA DEVIL
WITH LAWRENCE IN ARABIA
THE BOY'S LIFE OF COLONEL LAWRENCE
ADVENTURES IN AFGHANISTAN FOR BOYS
THE FIRST WORLD FLIGHT
BEYOND KHYBER PASS
EUROPEAN SKYWAYS

THE FIGHTING FACE OF
WOODFILL OF THE REGULARS

from one of the series of portraits of Congressional Medal of Honor men painted by the famous war artist, Joseph Cummings Chase.

WOODFILL
OF THE REGULARS

A TRUE STORY OF ADVENTURE
FROM THE ARCTIC TO THE ARGONNE

BY

LOWELL THOMAS

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1929

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FIRST EDITION

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FROM
GENERAL PERSHING'S REPORT

"DEEDS OF VALOR WERE TOO NUMEROUS TO MENTION HERE. OUTSTANDING WAS THE HEROISM OF LT. SAMUEL WOODFILL, FIFTH DIVISION, IN ATTACKING SINGLE-HANDED A SERIES OF GERMAN MACHINE-GUN NESTS NEAR CUNEL AND KILLING THE CREWS OF EACH IN TURN UNTIL REDUCED TO THE NECESSITY OF ASSAULTING THE LAST DETACHMENT WITH A PICK, DISPATCHING THEM ALL."

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B
W

PROLOGUE

So far *as I know, the telling of this tale is an altogether new idea. It is the biography of a common soldier. It is the story of the experiences and exploits of a man with a record of thirty-three years of service in the American army. This may sound uninteresting, but I'll wager few generals have lived more thrilling and adventurous lives.*

Although still very much alive he is almost as unknown to his fellow countrymen as the Unknown Soldier at Arlington. Yet he is one of the foremost fighting men that ever packed a gun for Uncle Sam. In addition to having piled up credit for more than thirty-three years' continuous service in the regular army, General Pershing referred to him as the greatest American soldier of the World War. Yet, as I have said, he is virtually unknown. To me this adds spice to the tale and makes it doubly interesting.

There were hosts of American soldiers who distinguished themselves during the World War, and a few received the highest of all American decorations, the Congressional Medal of Honor. The man whose adventurous life is set forth in these pages was one of these. There were many more who received lesser

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recognition for equally glorious and valorous deeds. Innumerable others, men still living, deserved high honors and received them not. Thousands more were mown down by enemy machine guns or blown into eternity by high explosive shells and thus deprived of the opportunity of sharing in the transient glory that might have been theirs had they survived.

But what makes me so enthusiastic about this particular story is that it is an unknown tale of a life well-nigh as adventurous as any in American history, a tale of a lad whose boyhood ambition was to be a soldier, and who realized his ambition by fighting for Uncle Sam in regions as far apart as the Philippines and the Rio Grande, the Arctic and the Argonne.

It would be wrong to say that he is entirely unknown, because nearly every man who fought in France has heard of him, and this is how I found that out: Some months ago he happened to be visiting me in the Berkshire hills. By way of variety and in order to enjoy a bit of sea bathing we decided to spend a week at a near-by beach. While there, an adjacent inland town staged the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary celebration of one of the crucial battles of the Revolutionary War. A friend who happened to be one of the committee in charge of the event told us there was to be an interesting parade and invited us to attend. Knowing that it would be a military affair, my soldier companion slipped into his uniform, the garb in which he feels most at home because he has worn it nearly all his life. When we arrived at the neighboring town we discovered that some

fifty thousand others were there ahead of us, so we were soon lost in the throng.

During the parade we slipped into the grandstand right opposite the temporary stand that had been erected for the speakers of the day and other visiting notables. Some of these were generals, others were state and Federal officials, and one was the National Commander of the American Legion. We had hardly dropped into our seats when a legionaire spotted my companion. He was attracted by the rows of ribbons across his tunic. His curiosity aroused, the legionaire edged over for a nearer view. Then he introduced himself and thus succeeded in getting my friend's name. He left us but was only gone for a moment, and when he returned he was accompanied by a committee. These gentlemen insisted upon taking my companion over to where the generals and other celebrities were sitting in the speakers' stand.

The principal orator of the day was to be National Commander Spafford of the American Legion. He had a set speech prepared but his first words were wholly impromptu. Rising and addressing his vast audience of civilians, military and naval people he said:

"Ladies and gentlemen, ever since the World War there has been one veteran of that conflict, one man of our regular army, whom I have wanted to meet. To my surprise and delight the opportunity came quite unexpectedly only a moment ago. A local legionaire discovered him out there in the grandstand with you. And

as a result I have the very great honor of introducing to you America's greatest soldier—Samuel Woodfill!"

We had been invited to a luncheon at the home of the commanding officer of the day, but it was long after the hour when I succeeded in getting Woodfill through the crowds that milled around him. However, before driving back to the coast, we stopped to present our regrets to our would-be host. As we entered his gate a captain in the United States army came down the walk and seized my companion's hand. Said he:

"Woodfill, you are one man I have long wanted to meet. I'd rather have your Argonne record than anything I know of. Yours was the greatest feat of them all. I may be your superior in rank but I take my hat off to you, sir!"

Then this captain led us to a garage in the back of the premises. The day was scorching hot, one of the hottest of the summer. Thousands of soldiers and sailors and their officers had gone through three hours of torture, hiking along dusty roads, and over still hotter asphalt streets. Thirty or forty of the officers were now gathered here in this garage around a hogshead of amber fluid. Generals, colonels, naval officers, and shavetail lieutenants had their coats off and were in the midst of a real old-time celebration. The captain who had met us down the walk jumped upon the table, seized the ladle from the hogshead, and rapped with it to silence the yells and songs. Then he said:

"Get up, damn yoh, get up!"

Mind you, this was a captain and most of the officers

in the room outranked him. So merely to say that his interruption annoyed them would be putting it mildly. In fact, it looked as though there might be a captain ready for evacuation to the nearest hospital in just about a minute unless he could square himself—which he did with these words:

"Get up, damn yoh, I want to propose a toast to the health of an unexpected guest. Here he is at my right. Gentlemen, I ask you to drink to the greatest soldier in the American army!"

And when they discovered it was Woodfill, from the brass hats down to the shavetails, they all drank.

Well, when I discovered that my friend Samuel Woodfill was looked up to in this manner by his former comrades in arms, and when I thought back over his record and recalled that his soldiering had included years of adventure in the Philippines, along the Polar Rim in Arctic Alaska, on the Mexican border, and then been topped off with the well-nigh incredible exploit in the Argonne for which he had received the Congressional Medal of Honor, I decided that his life story might be well worth recording, if for no other reason than to prove that giants still walk the earth.

My travels have brought me in contact with the armies of many nations in many parts of the world. And as I look back and recall the military men I have known, the two handsomest officers I can remember are Field Marshal Viscount Allenby, when he was in his prime, just after driving the Turks from Jerusalem, and General John J. Pershing as we used to see him at

Chaumont. But of the host of men of lesser rank that I have seen, Samuel Woodfill is the most soldierly looking of them all. However, he is not one of these dress-parade Apollos who merely looks impressive in a uniform. On the contrary, he is a soldier's ideal of what a soldier ought to be, tall, broad-shouldered, straighter than the proverbial ramrod, snap in every movement, with the eye of an Indian scout, and a weather-beaten face that might have been hewn from granite by a Thorwaldsen.

I once heard a brilliant European novelist described as every other *inch a man. Well, you only need one look at Woodfill of the Regulars to know that he is every inch a man from the heels of his boots to the tip of his service cap. And the story of his life is a rugged fighting tale—just the sort that you would expect from a man such as he.*

Woodfill represents a vanishing race—an archaic type of American frontiersman, a real survival of an earlier day, thrown into the infernal mechanism and modernistic terror of the greatest of all wars. It was pretty much as if Daniel Boone or Kit Carson by some miracle were brought back and thrown into the middle of the bloody fire-swept ground of the Argonne, with his primeval riflemanship and game-stalking, cover-taking cunning pitted, not against the Blackhawk or the Sioux, but against poison gas and machine guns. This Twentieth Century Daniel Boone stalked machine-gun nests just as the frontiersman of a century ago stalked his redskin enemy or a head of game.

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CHAPTER I

THE OLD SQUIRREL GUN

I Was Born with a Gun in My Hands—The Old Days on Indian Kentuck Creek—When I Yelled, John Came to the Rescue—The Overturned Raft—Although only Six, I Learned about Women from Her—Potting Squirrels on the Worm Fence.

THE first one of my tribe to come to America landed here from Wales. He was a trader of some sort or other and owned the land where Philadelphia stands to-day. He got it from the Indians for some kegs of powder and a keg of rum. Two of his sons, twins, Gabriel and Daniel, ran away and pushed west. All they had between 'em was the clothes on their back and a rooster and a hammer. Some of the Woodfills, I'm not sure just which ones, got mixed up in an Indian massacre along about the time of the Revolutionary War. One of them, with his two boys, Peter and John, were out diggin' stumps. Before the father knew what had happened the Indians had grabbed Peter and were carryin' him off. John, who had seen 'em comin', had run into the bushes. But when he observed them carryin' away his brother Peter he started to yell, and they came back and kidnaped him

too. Then them Indians started to chase the old man, who lit out for the house to give the alarm. Just as he reached the fence around the house, one of the redskins let go with his tomahawk. It missed and sunk deep into the top rail of the fence. He got away, barricaded himself, fired the alarm guns, and the Indians went off. Although the white settlers followed 'em for miles they lost the trail.

It so happened that old Winnemae, chief of this Indian tribe, had just lost his own son. He took a fancy to Peter and adopted him. John didn't fare so well and had to do most of the hard jobs in camp. All they gave him to eat was the entrails of wild turkeys.

Winnemae's squaw didn't object to havin' Peter for an adopted son. But she and some of the other squaws took him down to the river to wash the white blood out of him. Peter was something of a fire-eater and put up such a fight that he got one of the squaws down under the water and nearly drowned her. Old Chief Winnemae was watching the show and about split himself laughin'.

They put Peter to hoein' corn, but he loafed so much that Winnemae turned him over to the squaws and had him take care of the papooses. But every time the squaws would look the other way Peter would give those papooses a pinch or two to make them cry. He soon lost that job. But the old chief liked him for it because he was glad to see that Peter would not do squaw's work, and he believed the lad would grow up into a fine warrior.

Well, Peter and John lived with those Indians pretty near two years. Then when General "Mad Anthony" Wayne made a treaty with the redskins the father and some traders succeeded in gettin' the two Woodfill boys back in exchange for a keg of good hard rum. In the meantime, Peter had grown into such a big fellow that he weighed more than two hundred pounds.

Well, these Woodfills and their descendants came west and settled in Kentucky and Indiana along the Ohio River. About two thousand of their descendants are livin' to-day, and I am one of them. Father's name was John Samuel Goode Woodfill, so I get the Samuel part of my name from him. The life of those early pioneers was so hard and rough that if they grew to manhood they generally lived to a ripe old age. My father didn't get married until along about 1873, when he was fifty years old, and he was past sixty when I first remember him. Nor had times changed very much, so far as life in that section was concerned, when I was a boy.

Maybe there are people who are born with silver spoons in their mouths, but I had no such luck. However, I did come near being born with a gun in my hands. And I've had one there almost ever since—part of the time while gunning for big game, and part of it while gunning for humans.

The first thing I can remember were stories about war and shootin'. It used to get pretty cold down there along Indian Kentuck Creek were I was born and grew up. After supper when Dad had finished the chores we used

to sit round the old kitchen stove. We had a parlor, but Mother kept it shut up most of the time, and with its darkened windows and its kinda gruesome old family pictures starin' down from the walls it was too much like a morgue. So the kitchen was where we lived.

Most of the farmers down thereabouts in Jefferson County, Indiana, had been in the Civil War, same as Dad. Most of them looked like pioneers and I guess maybe they was. Dad was that sort, a dead shot, but quiet and never told us much about his fightin' days. But sometimes, o' nights, his old cronies would drop in, and then we boys would sit and listen to the tales and yarns they swapped back and forth across that old sheet-iron stove. John was my oldest brother, and at the time I recollect first I was about five or six and he was along about twelve or thirteen, a big, brawny chap rather quiet like Dad. John disappeared some years later and I have been searchin' for him for nigh on forty years now.

I guess we all get our powerful build from Dad. He was spare and lean, stood six foot in his socks, and in spite of the way he had pioneered and worked all his life he was as straight as the barrel of his old gun, all muscle, and not an ounce of fat. I remember him sittin' there, lookin' like a sort o' patriarch, with his long white hair and his bushy white beard. He always wore his hair long, like a lot of the old-timers did in those days. Most of the time he let the neighbors do the talkin' while he'd sit there and listen and chaw tobacker. Dad used his own brand of Long Green, home grown and home

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cured right there on Indian Kentuck Creek. He didn't raise much tobacker in those days—just a field or so along with his other crops. He and John and Will, my next oldest brother, used to bulk it down in the barn, let it go through a sweat, and then they would let it mellow awhile to give it flavor before they hung it up to dry. He'd pack a trunkful away to last him through the winter and sell the rest. I never remember him without a twist in his pocket.

Shootin' and soldierin' seemed to run in our family. Dad did his first bit in the Mexican War, and we used to sit there in the kitchen listenin' to him and the neighbors tellin' about how they landed at Vera Cruz and of all the trouble they had gettin' their six-inch gun over the mountains. They called that cannon of theirs "Big Sadie." A six-inch gun doesn't seem like much nowadays, but it was quite some cannon in those times. Every time they pulled her back and let her rip the whole battalion would yell like a band of Indians on the warpath.

Dad and his buddies helped General Scott at the stormin' of Mexico City. They took the last breastworks on the run, yellin' and shootin' like mad. And one of them greasers stuck his bayonet plumb through Dad's arm so's he had to carry a scar all his life.

"Anyway," he used to say, "I wasn't fool enough to give any of them dark-eyed señoritas a chance to brand me with another scar, like some of the men did."

I didn't exactly know what he meant in those days, but later on when I was a bit older he told me about how the American army lost more men holdin' Mexico City

than in stormin' it. They sure have some flashin'-eyed beauties in that man's country, and one glance from a dark-eyed señorita was enough to make many a soldier forget home and country. Then when the cunning señorita got a chance she'd tickle the soldier's ribs with a knife, and then go out and lure another victim.

Dad fought through the Mexican War as a first sergeant, and when the trouble broke out between North and South he served as a captain in the Fifth Indiana Volunteers.

Now and then Dad would take down from the shelf behind the kitchen clock the old flintlock musket he had shouldered all through the Civil War, and the double-edged saber the non-coms carried in the war with the Mex. Brother Bill fancied the saber, but it was the gun that always got me. I was more pleased to have Dad get down that gun and show us how it worked than I'd been if he'd bought me the finest toy in the country.

"When I grow up I'm goin' to be a soldier, too," I would pipe up.

That always brought jeers from my brothers, especially Bill.

"Listen, infant," Bill would holler, "there ain't no soldier blood in you. Soldiers don't wear no dresses, nor sissy curls nuther."

Bill had me there. For some reason that I can't exactly remember now I didn't want to give up wearin' dresses and curls. Guess it was cause I had been the baby of the family for quite a while. But when my sister Mary was born Mother said it was time for me to start wear-

in' trousers and be a regular boy with short hair. But when anybody came near me with scissors I'd holler so loud they'd have to give it up. So I was six years old and still rigged out in dresses and curls. No matter how much my brothers and other boys would poke fun at me, I couldn't see why you couldn't shoot a gun in dresses just the same as in pants. But one day the family put up a trick on me.

On the next farm there was an eighteen-year-old neighbor girl named Amelia. She was my first sweetheart. At any rate, that was what I thought and I said so to everybody else. So Mother went to Amelia and asked her to use her influence. Which she proceeded to do. At that time she was being courted by a young man named Charley Giesler, and Charley would come and take her buggy-ridin' every Sunday afternoon. Well, I didn't like that much.

"Sammy," says Amelia, "if you want to be my best beau you'll have to look like a little man instead of like a girl."

That did sound sort o' reasonable, and for the sake of the fair Amelia I stood meek as a lamb while she snipped off my curls. So that first girl of mine turned out to be my Delilah. But when Mother fixed me up in a pair of pants that she had cut down from some old ones of John's I forgot all about girls. My ambition now, more than ever, was to be a soldier. But there was no gettin' round Brother Bill.

"Yeh, Sammy, you got pants now all right, but just

how you gonna shoot a gun with that crippled thumb of yours?"

This gave me something else to worry about. In the shed behind the house we had a cider mill that was turned by hand. And one day when I was out there foolin' with the crank, which Mother had told me to stay away from, I slipped off the box on which I was standin' and caught my hand right in the gears. It pretty near made sausage out of that right thumb.

We hadn't any telephones in those days and the doctor lived a long ways off. So Dad had a remedy of his own for most everything. With a family of boys he purt nigh had to. Once John fell and split his cheek wide open, and another time Bill took a header out of the hay mow and landed on a hook. It missed his eye by a bare half inch. So Dad was always ready for accidents. He put brown sugar on my thumb, bound it up tight, and then soaked the bandage and sugar in turpentine. Mebbe you think I didn't howl. Then he kept puttin' more turpentine on that thumb for a week. When he took the bandage off there was no infection and the thumb healed up in jig time, although it was never the same thumb after. But twisted and queer as it looks, it serves me just as good as any thumb. However, Bill had me worried until one day when Dad got down his old-fashioned squirrel rifle. It was one of them old frontier muzzle-loaders called a "Long Tom," with an octagon-shaped barrel and bullets that ran thirty to the pound. That old Long Tom with its forty-two-inch barrel was more'n a foot longer than I was.

"Wal, s'pose you try her yourself, Sammy," said Dad. Then he rested Long Tom on the window sill, pointed it at a fence post in the chicken yard, and showed me how to take aim. I pulled the trigger, and by Jiminy Christmas, I hit the post! My bum thumb didn't make any difference after that.

That was just about the biggest day of my life up to then, and I went round pesterin' everybody by tellin' 'em what a crack shot I was and how I sure enough was goin' to be a soldier. That Sunday when my grandfather and grandmother on my mother's side came over for chicken dinner I told them, too.

"Ach, no more iss he a girl," I remember Grandpap Haverline sayin' when he saw my new pants. You see, my mother's folks were Germans, and talked with an accent, an accent so darn thick sometimes we couldn't tell what it was all about.

"Und so you would be a soldier! Ach, Christina, und vhy do you let dot leetle poy get sooch ideas? Soldiers und vars are nod for dis country any more. Ach, let der Old Country teach poys to be soldiers. But in America ve should haf no more vars."

You see, Grandpap had decamped from Germany about the time the old Kaiser was beginning to make his big military preparations. Lots of Germans came over along about then because they objected to being forced into the army. Grandpap was one of them. He was a sturdy old fellow with as fine a crop of bristly chin whiskers as ever waggled along the banks of the Ohio. I don't recollect what part of Germany they

came from but I do know that they spoke a dialect called "high German."

What interested me most was that when Grandmother and Grandpap wrote and said they were comin' to visit us, Mother would start cookin' sauerkraut and apfelkuchen. Then we boys used to get a big laugh out of sittin' round and listenin' to 'em all talkin' German. Strange world this. Grandpap leaves the Old Country to keep from fightin' with the Germans and a generation later his grandson goes back across the water to fight against them.

But on Dad's side of the house my forbears were Welshmen. I happen to know considerable about them because I had a great-uncle who evidently didn't have anythin' better to do, so he spent his time ferretin' around, runnin' down old family records. Perhaps he wasn't so dumb, either. You see, he had learned that quite a big fortune had been left by a man in Wales named Woodfill, who had passed on without any immediate heirs. His fortune was bein' held up by the British courts. So my great-uncle spent half his life scoutin' for family records, and he was just ready to take a boat for Wales to claim the loot when one day he got into a rumpus with his wife. Maybe she was a queer sort of woman who had no use for money. Anyhow, she got hysterical and threw all his records in the stove.

Well, that great-uncle of mine had copies of some of the data, but he died before he could get together another complete set of sworn documents. The rest of the

Woodfill family never bothered much about the matter. For all I know, that big fortune may be pilin' up at compound interest and still waitin' for us. And, boy, how I could use some of it—right now!

Since the war a relative sent me a copy of one of the records, a letter written by John Basil Woodfill, one of our ancestors, when he was eighty-seven years old. He tells how our name originated. It appears there were some regions in Wales called fens, or fins. Some were marshy and some were wooded. Our ancestors took their flocks and herds to the wooded fens for pasture, and settled there. Up to that time they were just called Joe, or Tom, or Jim, but after a while other people started callin' 'em "Joe of the Wood Fin." So in that way Woodfin became our family name. By and by that got switched into Woodfill.

I saw another family record once that said our history went back to the Twelfth Century in Wales, and then there is some French and Dutch mixed in us, too.

A branch of the Indian Kentuck Creek ran through our farm, and when spring high water came along it would swell until it was two or three times its regular size.

About the time I got those first pants of mine one of those floods came along. It got so high it carried away the foot log we used to get across. John and Bill were on the other side when she went out. "Guess you'n me'll have to build another bridge fer the boys, Sammy," said Dad. So I followed along at his heels. While puttin' the timbers in place, the torrent brought a good-sized

boulder down the stream. It smashed into the scantlin' on which Dad was standin' and over he went head first into the water, hittin' his temple on the rock. The next thing I knew there he was, unconscious, floatin' off down the stream.

I hollered for all I was worth. The boys out at the barn heard me. John saw Dad's raincoat on the bank, and in a moment he was out there in the stream, swimmin' ashore with Dad. We thought he was dead, and my hollerin' brought Mother from the house. She seemed to size up the situation in a flash, ran for a barrel that was under the eave spout to catch rainwater, and then helped lay Dad over it to drain out his lungs. I can still see that stream of water pouring from him. Although John was only fourteen, he was a powerful fellow, and finally he got Dad to breathing again. That rescue made me look up to John all the more, and I decided I had better learn to swim, too.

So that summer I had my first lesson. And one lesson was enough. Bill had taken an old barn door out to the swimmin' hole, for a raft. He said he would give me a ride on it, and started tippin' it back and forth to scare me. He tipped it a bit too far and off I went into six feet of water. Then that board flopped down again with me right underneath. You can bet your boots there was one scared lad on top of that raft as well as one underneath. When I finally wiggled out from under, after swallowin' half the water in the swimmin' hole, Bill was on the other side fishin' around for me.

"Hang onto the raft," he hollered, "and I'll pull you out."

But I had had enough of Bill for that day. For all I knew he might have some more tricks up his sleeve. So I lit out for shore, paddlin' dog fashion, and I got there. That's how I learned to swim, and since then I've been swimming in everything from the Rio Grande and Manila Bay to the glacier rivers of the Arctic.

Well, my parents sent me off to country school along with the rest of the family, with a dinner pail in one hand and a new slate in the other. The little red schoolhouse was three miles or so from our place and we had to cross a stream that didn't have a bridge. In low water it was all right, but when the rains came we had to wade. When the weather got a bit cold, but still not cold enough to freeze the stream solid, we just naturally had to stay out of school a lot.

In those days they didn't have no laws about makin' children go to school, and very few of those pioneer settlers along that part of the Ohio took much stock in book learnin'. So I never did go to school much. When I did go, spellin' was my specialty. But the multiplication tables was one hurdle I never did get over. There was one girl in school that I thought was about right, and I used to try and show off in front of her whenever there was a spellin' bee. She had black pigtails with red ribbons, and she would giggle when I stuttered over my arithmetic problems. That'd make me pretty mad and I'd keep hopin' for another spellin' match. Later on, when I joined the army, I still remembered that little

girl with the black pigtails and I would have gone back to get her if it hadn't been that army pay was only thirteen dollars a month.

It wasn't until I was ten years old that I really got to doin' much with a gun. I was still a bit too small to hold Dad's rifle, but I could aim as well as the rest of them if I could only rest it on something. I just couldn't keep my hands off that rifle. When nobody was around I'd slip into the house and get it, along with the caps and bullets and the powder horn. Then I'd slip out into the hills around our house. In those days it was mostly woodland and you could go for miles and miles without leavin' the forest.

Naturally the woods were chuck-full of squirrels. My favorite spot was a ridge covered with hickory and oak. Right up on top of it was a place where three split-rail fences came together. "Worm" fences, we called them, because they zigzagged back and forth. Somehow the squirrels would go out of their way just to run along the tops of those fences. When they came to that three-cornered section they would hesitate a moment before goin' on. And that's where I used to pot 'em.

I was still so short I had to climb up on a log beside the fence to pour the powder in the muzzle of the gun when it was standin' up straight. Then I'd rest the barrel on a log and wait for Mr. Squirrel. Sometimes I'd stay for hours until I'd bagged a whole mess. Then I'd sneak into the house and try to put the rifle back without anybody seeing me. I'd always tell Mother a cock-and-bull story about bein' out with neighbor boys who had given

me the squirrels. But Mother saw me goin' in with the rifle one day.

"Well, Sammy, so this is where them squirrels air comin' from," said she. "Just you wait till Father hears about this."

I thought I was in for it. I didn't care so much about the lickin' I figured I'd get as I did about not bein' able to get the rifle any more. I never was much on talk, but I sure did make a regular Patrick Henry speech to Dad that day. I showed him my bag of squirrels and I showed him how I could handle that squirrel rifle. I told him I had sense enough not to hurt myself nor anyone else. He looked me over kinda steady and said mebbe I did. I guess maybe he was proud of me after all. Anyhow, from then on he let me take the rifle any time he or the other boys were not usin' it. So it wasn't long before I could handle it about as well as anyone. We used to fry the squirrels like chicken, unless we got an old boy, and then we would have to parboil him first.

I never did play many games when I was a youngster. Shootin' was my specialty, and always has been.

One day, along about then, John decided to see the world. So he and another lad took off for the railroad and Montana. They worked around Cripple Creek and Butte in the gold and copper mines. One day John rolled in at home with a few hundred dollars in his jeans. I looked on him as a sort of millionaire.

While John was at home this time, Helpin' Dad, we had our first family tragedy. Work on the farm had slacked up a bit and Dad had gone across into Ken-

tucky to visit some of his Civil War comrades. On his way home he crossed the Ohio River on a skiff. Then he climbed up a hog-backed hill. When he got to the top he was pretty hot, so he sat down to rest and fell off to sleep. When he woke up he was chilled through from the stiff river breeze. He got home, but he was a sick man and kept gettin' worse and worse. He had never been sick before in his life. When the old doctor came from the village he said:

"John, you're pretty bad off; you've got pneumonia."

The Doc stayed there day and night, but a week later Dad was dead. He was about seventy-two when he went. A month before he died he was stronger than any of us boys and could skin us a mile at cuttin' timber and rollin' logs.

I went to school a few months after this, but it didn't amount to much. By the time I was fourteen I was doing a man's heavy work—cuttin' spoke timber and cordwood with my brothers. Although most folks think I'm pretty big now I was an undersized runt in those days. Maybe it was because I drank so much coffee. My mother bein' German, there was always a pot of hot coffee on the stove and I used to come in from work and drain the pot to the last drop, dregs, grounds, and all. I had that habit bad. Anyway, when I was eighteen years old I'd worked so hard and consumed so much coffee I was as round shouldered as a hundred-year-old bookkeeper.

Then came the sinkin' of the *Maine*. The papers were full of it. Here was my chance to be a soldier.

CHAPTER II

THE WRONG BULL'S-EYE

I Join the Army and Go off to War—My First Encounter with a Redskin—"She's Sinkin'," a Rookie Yelled—"Man Overboard!"—Luckily, I Saved the Sergeant's Life—A Perfect Shot, but Oh, What a Bawling out it Brought.

WELL, we didn't get far in that war. The recruitin' officer turned Bill and I down flat, me because I wasn't eighteen yet, and Bill because he had a finger and thumb blown clean off once by a dynamite cap.

But all three of us had the itchin' to leave that backwoods country and go out and have a look at the world. Things seemed pretty slow around our place. John was the first to push off. One day he packed his home-made duffle bag and said:

"Well, here goes. If I make good, I'll be a-comin' back. If I don't—you'll never see no more of me."

Then along came the Filipino insurrection. Uncle Sam called for volunteers again. I was past eighteen now, so I hooked the first train over to Louisville. In jig time they had me rigged out in fightin' togs and on a train to Frisco and the Philippines.

Up until this time I hadn't been exactly what you'd

call a traveler. The farthest I'd been away from home was just across the Ohio River to see some of the Woodfills who lived in Kentucky. So I was gettin' as much thrill out of this train trip to San Francisco as I would've had I been astride a rocket headed for the moon. Just seein' new people and new towns and new country was excitin' for me, although as I look back on it now it was a fairly tame beginning considerin' the life that lay ahead of me. The only high lights of the trip were when some recruit would get too much snake-bite medicine under his belt, or when some of the coons we had along would get in a sweat over a crap game and start wavin' razors.

I'd never even seen a mountain, so when I got my first glimpse of the Rockies my eyes ran right out on stems. "By Golly," thought I to myself, "why didn't John write to us about all this?" And I was mighty glad I'd had sense enough to join the army in order to see the world.

Somewhere out near the Mojave Desert I saw my first Indian. There was an old buck and his squaw with a whole troop of little redskins a-ridin' a coal gondola on a train right next to where ours had pulled in. So I crawled up the ladder on their car to get a good look. That buck was the biggest man I'd ever seen. Although sittin' flat on the floor of the car, Indian style, with his feet hitched under him, still he was as tall as I was standin' up. He must have seen what a rube I was because he gave a big "Whoooof," made a spring at me, and I nearly broke my neck gettin' down off that car.

My brothers were both six-footers and over. But alongside this Indian they'da been pygmies. I was so green I thought this giant was just an ordinary-sized redskin. I said somethin' about it to the other boys. When I showed my ignorance in this way they started stuffin' me with all sorts of fairy stories and soon had me thinkin' this Indian nothin' but pint size. I doubt if a greener lad than I ever joined up with Uncle Sam.

In the rookie camp at Frisco they brought us our first coffee. But it tasted like dishwater. So I said, "If this is what Uncle Sam gives you for coffee, guess I'll swear off the stuff. It won't be hard to quit if I can't get anything better'n this." That's the way I got rid of one of my worst habits. I was ambitious to be a crack shot and somehow I didn't think my marksmanship was what it oughter be. Someone said it was from drinkin' too much strong coffee. So even if I did like my mocha, well I guess I kinda liked shootin' better. And from the day I knocked off the stuff I ain't had no trouble with my hand being unsteady on the trigger. Pretty nigh from the first I qualified as an expert rifleman, and that meant an extry dollar a month when the eagle screamed. You'd be surprised how far an extry dollar went in those days, too. Soon a new ruling came along that gave two dollars extry per to a marksman, three to a sharpshooter, and five to an expert rifleman. And the shootin' in that man's army sure did get better in a hurry.

But that first day in Frisco was a washout for me. I was feelin' rotten for fair, and went up to the hospital for some medicine.

"You're just homesick," said the orderly. But I knew better. Every day I got worse, until one morning I could hardly waggle a fin.

The top sarge told me to stick in my tent, but I began to get chills and craved somethin' sour. I went over to the mess tent, but they didn't have a lemon in the place, and I didn't have a red cent to my name. So I looked through my bag to see what I could sell. You see, wherever you find a bunch of soldiers you also find a Jew second-hand dealer, and the sheeny gave me fifty cents for some shoes, and it all went for lemons. I cooked a lemon stew, drank the works, and hit the hay. But still I shivered. So I got up and pinched all the other rookies' blankets, and piled 'em on.

When the boys came in from drill they sure put up a howl.

"Who'n hell's swiped my blankets?"

Then one of 'em saw my head stickin' out from under a pile. Being red, like a carrot, mebbe it was conspicuous. Anyhow, he walked over with a combative look in his eye. But when he got near he calmed down in a hurry.

"Holy jumpin' gosh," he hollered, "here's a chap with the measles."

Well, I'd a rather rough go of it and didn't see much of old San Francisco. But they did let me out of quarantine just in time to go aboard the transport with the Eleventh Infantry as it came through from Fort Ethan Allen in Vermont. Before marching us on the transport *Logan* they gave us new blue uniforms. In mine I

fancied myself so much that my spirits went up a hundred per cent. And then when they handed me a brand new high-powered rifle—well, I was so chesty I wouldn't have changed places with old Napoleon the way he was a-feelin' the day they made that picture of him standin' with one hand stuck in the front of his tunic. "Napoleon Crossin' the Alps," I guess you call it.

But it didn't take long for that anything-but-Pacific Ocean to take the starch out of me. After we'd passed Honolulu a blow came up and had that old transport doing a series of nose dives and barrel rolls.

"She's sinkin'!" some rookie yelled.

"Well, let 'er sink," groaned most of us.

But we were all sure scared green. And the darkies on board—well, those boys just clean gave up the ghost and got down on their knees and started "callin' on de Lo'd." They got so pale they looked like white folks. So much water came pourin' down into the hold where we were that we all thought the old ship was on her way to Davy Jones. But it was only a big wave that had swept right over the deck before they could get the hatches battened down. That water came all the way down through three decks, and from then on, with every roll of the ship, it would swish back and forth under our bunks. I sure did feel like that Negro during the World War who was so seasick on the transport crossing to France. When he got his first sight of land he recovered his spirits, but when someone asked him how he liked the trip, all he said was:

"Say, Boss, when I goes home to Alabam,' I ain't agwine by way of no Atlantic Ocean. I'se agwine by way of Noo Orleans."

Everybody who was not seasick had to get busy on the pumps, and all the time the storm kept gettin' worse, and most of the fellows was crawlin' into their bunks like dyin' calves. As fer myself, I only missed one meal, and I only lost one. But some of those rookies just about konked out.

"Keep her end on! Keep her end on!" we could hear the captain of the ship yell.

"Oh, for Gawd's sake," groaned one sergeant as the rollin' pitched him out of his bunk, "let 'er go sideways and put us out of our misery!"

Well, finally the sea stopped kickin', and we all went up for air. The first thing we knew there was a cry, "Man overboard!" Some fool rookie had tried to see if he could sit on the rail. But a wave came along and bucked him off into the sea. The engines stopped and some of those big circular life preservers were thrown into the water. But the thing happened at dusk and that rookie just vanished as though he'd been swallowed up by the waves.

But you know the old saying about the Almighty taking care of fools and drunks. I know it sounds fishy, but, believe it or not, that rookie came strollin' into the barracks out in Manila three months later! Although no one on the ship had spotted him out there among the waves, he got hold of one of those life preservers after all. Luckily, he was a good swimmer. Next day he said

the sea calmed down and he guessed he must have floated and swum darned near halfway to Australia. Anyhow, according to his story, an Australian schooner picked him up and took him to Sydney. There he reported to the American consul, who got him passage on the first ship bound for Manila. How's that for a yarn? Anyhow, there he was, and I guess he must have been tellin' the truth.

Although we were on our way to the island of Leyte to relieve another outfit, we made our first stop at Manila. While the ship lay at anchor we amused ourselves by watching the natives dive for money. We tossed out almost every penny on the ship. But rookies will be rookies, and one poor simp who had gotten himself a five-dollar gold piece in Frisco made a mistake and tossed it overboard thinking it was a penny. He couldn't swim, but when he found out what he had done it was all we could do to keep him from jumping in after the Filipino who dove for it. As for that lucky diver, he struck out for shore like a streak of light.

A little later the officers told us we could go in swimming, too. Some of the lifeboats were lowered so's to be ready if anyone started to drown. They also let us take along life preservers. The natives swam with us, and they had a stunt of diving right under the transport and coming out on the other side.

Well, there was another fool rookie, just as there always is. This fellow said: "Aw, shucks, I can do that, too." So he dives, but he didn't come up no more. We spread the alarm and a couple of the best divers among

those Filipinos went down to see if they could find him. They didn't, but two days later his body was found floating on the surface. Mebbe he came up against the bottom of the transport, ran out of breath and couldn't escape in time.

There was another one of our outfit who nearly cashed 'em in that day. His name was Edson Small and he was top sergeant of my company. All of us rookies had been admirin' him and envyin' him on the way across the Pacific on account of the handsome mustache he had. Well, Small was out swimming without a life preserver. I happened to be a pretty strong swimmer myself but since this was my first dip in the old ocean and we had been told to keep a weather eye out for sharks, I took a preserver along just for luck. I'd chuck it off to one side on the waves for a while, and when I got tired I'd pull over to it and rest. What surprised me was to find how much easier it was swimmin' in Manila Bay than back in our old swimmin' hole down on the farm. The tide was running out, and I just kept on goin'. About seventy-five yards from the *Logan* I heard somebody let out a yelp. Peering around, I saw the top sarge.

"Hey, kid," he yells, "bring me that life preserver."

Now the sarge was a big, husky, athletic chap—six foot two, with shoulders like a prize fighter—so I thought he was just foolin'. But he yelled louder and louder and I concluded he must be in trouble. When I got over to him I found it was not sharks that had him. He was just crampin' and strugglin' like sixty to stay on

top. As he clutched the life preserver, I yelled for a lifeboat.

Small was a fine swimmer and had lit out to circle Manila Bay. I just happened to be the only fellow near him when he got into trouble. I guess he'da been a gonner if I hadn't been there, because the cramps had him in both legs.

"You're all right, kid," he says to me after we had pounded him back into shape. "If you can shoot like you can swim we'll make a regular soldier out of you yet."

When we got to Leyte they started putting us through the paces, and I began to doubt whether anybody could make a soldier out of me. If there was a bigger dumbbell in the outfit than I was I didn't see him. It may be true that country boys are stronger and hardier than city lads. But you can take it from me, they're a lot more awkward and the wheels in their brains don't turn over so fast. City boys play more games that make them quick-witted. Anyway, I know one dumb rookie named Sam Woodfill who had one tough time getting wise to the wrinkles of soldiering. They fired orders at us so fast my brain got left behind and I went into what aviators call a "tailspin." When the drill sergeant would say, "Shoulder arms!" of course I'd sense enough to know what that meant, but for a long time I usually mounted my cannon on the wrong shoulder. As to the difference between "Column left!" and "Right face!" I always managed to do the wrong thing. Then when the sergeant would order us to march, I'd usually get off with the wrong foot and keep steppin' on the heels of

the fellow in front of me, while he'd cuss me out of the side of his mouth and the drill sergeant would bawl me out until he was red in the face.

A hard-boiled Irishman named O'Shaughnessey was the chap who tried to teach me, and the way that Mick could turn the air blue with lurid language was worth the price of admission. He was an old frontiersman—stocky and strong, with a ruddy face, shrewd blue eyes, and an unruly shock of iron-gray hair. All the green rookies were turned over to him. And when he found some dumb bird like myself who couldn't tell his right hand from his left he'd give him a stone to carry in the left. I know it doesn't seem possible, but there are actually some recruits who just can't learn at all, and have to be sent to some branch of noncombatant service, like the signal corps or the hospital corps.

"Well," I thought to myself, "mebbe I'm dumb at juggling this weapon and doing pretty maneuvers, but just wait till the time comes for us to shoot these things. That's when I'll show these other chaps up." Yeh, and that's right where I pulled my biggest bonehead play.

We were having our first target practice, and it was raining cats and monkeys, the way it can do out there in those tropical islands. Every man had his poncho and his pup tent spread out on the ground and was lying on it. Out in front were half a dozen targets at a range of six hundred yards. The sergeant called out which target each man was to shoot at: "Brown, number one; Jackson, number two; Woodfill, number three," and so on. We took aim, and I made a clean bull's-eye first

crack out of the box. At six hundred yards that wasn't too bad, and I felt quite cocky. Now let that sergeant bawl me out!

And that's just what he was doing!

"What the blankety blank blank do you blankety blank think you're shootin' at?" he yelled. "Snap out of the fog and pay attention to orders."

I had made the bull's-eye all right. The trouble was it was the wrong bull's-eye. I had been shootin' at Jackson's target. Just the same, the sarge was good enough sport to admit that it was good shootin'. Of course the mistake cost me that first score. We each had ten shots, and I made eight bull's-eyes and two fours, which gave me the high score of the day in spite of my boner. So I grew another inch right away, for my biggest ambition in life was to qualify as a crack marksman.

CHAPTER III

CHASING GUERRILLAS

Boots the Cook and Murph the Monk—Hot Hand Hathaway and Slop-Up Hansen—A Surprise Attack and an Escape Over a Precipice—Jaw-bone Weddings —The Insurgent Priest.

WHEN that hard-boiled Mick, O'Shaughnessey, felt he could trust us to shoot *insurrectos* and not ourselves, they split our company into five outfits to garrison five little towns on the north end of the island. Leyte is one of the big islands in about the middle of the Philippines. My gang had the village of Carigara, right on the coast, and a part of our job was to keep the other four detachments supplied with food and ammunition. Nor did we do this with any speedy airplane service. Our only vehicle was the slow-going Filipino springless cart, pulled by languid water buffalo. In "high" they could sprint along at about two miles an hour. But if the goin' was bad this dazzlin' speed would be cut in half. So it used to take us all day to make the nine-mile trip out to Barugo and back. We chauffeurs of the fleet of buffalo carts would stuff some hardtack and a can of beef or beans in our pockets, jump aboard our *carabao* cart, and away we'd go. When the mud got too bad our *carabao*

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would insist on stopping to waller in each mud hole. Our native assistants would flail them unmercifully and those old buffalo would just sit right there in the mud.

If we were late deliverin' our supplies we always heard about it aplenty from the soldiers who were waitin' for us. Sometimes they'd be down to their last can of beans. There was one outfit that chased the Filipinos so far inland that their rations didn't come up for two days. About the time they were ready to make stew out of their boots they came to a little lake where some Filipino goo-goo was raisin' ducks. Ten men were detailed to bring some in. Back to camp they came with two hundred ducks and ten bushels of eggs. Well, the roast duck went over big, but those boys sure got stung on the eggs. Every doggone one of those ten bushels of eggs had a young duck inside.

Often when we were out from camp we'd depend on wild fruit and coconuts. We went barefoot a lot out there in the islands, and I soon learned to shin up a coconut tree just like a goo-goo. Most of the coconut trees were more than fifty feet high. One time I saw a fine bunch of them hangin' on a low tree. I felt just like a darkey gazin' at a ripe watermelon. I wondered why everybody else had missed this particular bunch. Well, it didn't take me long to find out. Up I went, and when I started twisting off the first nut a swarm of yellow jackets swooped down on me. I came down that tree like a fireman slidin' down a pole headed for a four-alarm fire. After that I went the other way whenever I saw a bunch of coconuts that looked too easy to get. The

Filipino brand of yellow jackets seemed to do their roosting in coconut palms.

The goo-goos were behavin' themselves most of the time, so this made it possible for us to spend many days huntin' and explorin'. Once we brought in some lizards that measured more than seven feet. One day I went out with a buddie named Langowitz and a chap named "Dusty" Collins. While huntin' for wild hogs we came to a channel separatin' Leyte from another smaller island. It was so shallow we just rolled up our breeches and waded over. But the monkeys were making so much noise in the jungle that the wild hogs were frightened off. Those blasted monks were tippin' the hogs off to our presence.

"I'm goin' down there and put a muzzle on that monkey circus," said Langowitz.

He went down the hill and soon we heard him shootin'—bang, bang, bang—his whole magazine. Then he must have reloaded because he began to shoot some more. After that he started to holler like hell for us, and we rushed down the hill to see what was up.

We found that "Witz" had bearded a band of at least fifty big gray-whiskered monks. But they were stout fellows and instead of runnin' away they made a circle and started to close in on him. When we got there the nearest ones were only six feet away from him, and creeping nearer. Both of us began to shoot and yell right away. But we had to reload and pepper at 'em some more before those gray-whiskered jungle people would take to their heels and tails. The ground was lit-

tered with their dead and Witz sure was skeered plumb out of his wits.

After that tussle we somehow lost our enthusiasm for huntin' wild hogs and started back for our own island. But when we got to the shallow channel we had crossed we found the tide had come in and the water was about three hundred yards wide and at least ten feet deep. You can bet we felt foolish. Well, we started along the shore until we found an old dugout made from the trunk of a tree. Then we got a stick for a paddle and started out. The water was getting higher and higher, and a little way out Dusty must have moved, or rolled his chaw of tobacco from one jaw to the other, because over we went into the channel, rifles, ammunition belts, and all. We couldn't swim far with all that load, so we had to beat it back for the shore.

Dusty and Witz, who were older than I was and big strappin' fellows built like grizzlies, stripped and hurriedly swam out to get the dugout, which was driftin' out to sea. Then we went searchin' again to find some bamboo poles so we could make an outrigger. Finally we got the dugout fixed so it would not capsize and just before dark we managed to get across. On account of the darkness we were obliged to make a long detour around a swamp as we didn't want to take a chance of crossin' it at night. Those last few miles were pretty hard goin' and we all wondered just what would happen when we turned up in camp. Of course, we tried to sneak in on the quiet, but the first person we bumped into was the top kick.

"And here's where we catch it!" Dusty whispered. But we didn't even get a bawlin' out. They'd been afraid we had been picked off by a band of goo-goo outlaws and were pretty glad to see us safe. Anyhow, Sergeant Small hadn't forgot that I gave him a hand in Manila Bay.

"You're all right, kid," he used to say to me. "If it wasn't for you I'd be stokin' fires in Hades now."

Top Kick Small was the live wire of our company. Besides being the captain's right bower, he was one of the most popular fellows we had. How that chap could warble! He always led the gang in singin' the old barber shop chords out there in the jungle. Then, too, it was nothin' for him to entertain the whole outfit for an entire evenin'. It wasn't what he sang so much as the way he sang it. I can hear him yet, roaring out his favorite song, "Oh, the carabao has no hair in Mindanao." He was a rattlin' good soldier, too, and after the insurrection they made him a captain of the native scouts. I wonder whatever became of him. I'll bet he ended up by being a major or a colonel in the World War.

The top kick was one of the gang of old-timers in our company. What those fellows didn't know about soldiering, neither did nobody else. There was old O'Shaughnessey, our drill sergeant, and a great big, two-fisted, rawboned Yank from Vermont named "Hot Hand" Hathaway, a slippery Mick named Riley Coakley, and "Slop-Up" Hansen.

Yes, you guessed it, Slop-Up got his nickname from the way he could lap up the hard liquor. He was a huge, broad-shouldered, good-natured Swede, and a regular

Wonderful rice terraces of the Mountain Province, Philippine Islands.

Carabao cart in use in the Albany Province, Philippines.

polar bear as well when it came to a scrap. He was always ready for a rough and tumble row, and he was in almost every expedition our company pulled off. One time he was out in the jungle getting some bamboo with two Filipino prisoners to help him. They were both pretty tough hombres, and when he turned his back on them for a second they started to use their *bolos* on him instead of on the bamboo. Slop-Up just shot 'em cold on the spot.

When we didn't have any ructions with the goo-goos to keep us outa mischief, you'd see that gang of old-timers sittin' over a poker game. The company baker usually sat in, too—that is, he did if he was through mixin' dough for his ovens, and if he had any dough left in his jeans. He was a Swiss, and somewhere someone had fastened the moniker of "Boots" onto him. And wherever Boots went, there his pet monkey, "Murph," would go, too. Boots had picked him up in the jungle on a huntin' trip, when the monkey was a tiny baby, and he dubbed him "Murphy" because he said he had a face like an old Irishman.

If there was a poker game on, Murph would be there too. He would swing from chair to chair. First he would perch on one fellow's shoulders and then on another's, whisperin' confidential-like and searchin' in the player's hair for little visitors, whether there was any or not. The boys got so they didn't pay any attention to him, when all of a sudden there would be a swoop and Murph would grap the jackpot from the table and make off with it to the top of the nearest coconut palm. If any-

body wanted to learn the latest wrinkles in Irish and Swiss cussin', both plain and fancy, that was the time to tune in.

Well, I caught Murph going out of headquarters one day with a ruler in one paw and a red lead pencil in the other. He squealed and dropped the pencil when I took after him. When I went inside to see what he'd been up to I found the air positively blue. Murph had pulled all the papers out of the sergeant major's desk, and spilled the red ink. Then he got the ink on his paws and daubed it all over the place. So the sergeant major had to duplicate a big lot of official papers and letters and get them all re-signed. After that Boots had to keep Murph in his bakeshop, and usually chained, at that.

One day Boots was in the bakeshop puttin' a big batch of loaves into shape. He built up the fire and then left the bread to rise while he went out to "hoist one" at the canteen. He forgot all about Murph bein' loose in the bakery. When he went back to stoke his fire it looked as though the tail of a Chinese typhoon had gone through the place. It was a mess of flour and dough and sponge and monkey, and you couldn't exactly tell which was which. Murph had been havin' the time of his young life wallerin' in every pan and then bombardin' the stove and walls with the sticky dough.

Well, the cussin' Murph had had on previous occasions was polite society language compared to what Boots had to say when he saw this. Pickin' up a cleaver, he went for that monk. Murph let out a squeal and made the door in one leap. Then he streaked it up the tallest

tree in the post like greased lightnin'. There he sat, drippin' dough and flour and chatterin'. Boots kept right on cussin', but at the same time he gathered up a pile of rocks with which he began to bombard Murph. One of them popped the poor monk right in the ribs and sent him sailin' through the air. When he dropped to the ground, Boots polished him off with the meat cleaver. That was the end of Murph.

One pay day the poker game among the old-timers started out with big stakes, and Riley Coakley got wiped out. I met him just as he was leavin' the game.

"Say, kid, lend me fifty cents," he says.

"Sure thing," I answered, and gave him the four bits.

He decided he was through with poker, and tried a game of monte for a change. Luck was with him, and it wasn't long before he tapped in and began dealin' himself. He stayed there and raked in the money as long as there was anything left to rake, and then went out to look for something else. He got in on another monte game with some Filipinos, including the *presidente* of the town, and this time there was big money present. When the game broke up that night Coakley was nine hundred bucks to the good.

I didn't know whether I would ever see that fifty-cent piece again or not, but the next night Coakley came over and tossed me a five-dollar bill.

"Your share of the loot, Sam," was all he said.

Then he went out on a big drunk—"tea parties," that gang called 'em. When he came to he was in the mill. The effects of his load of liquor hadn't entirely worn

off, and he started to swear and rampage around. Our barracks in those days at Carigara were in the *Tribunal,* or city hall, and the old Spanish stocks were still intact there. When Coakley kept on raisin' a rumpus in the guardhouse they clapped him in the stocks. He was a big burly fellow, and the openings in the heavy mahogany boards were a bit small for his legs. He sat there and howled and cursed and raised Cain about the stocks pinchin' his legs. The guards took a look and saw he wasn't bein' actually injured, and there he sat until he was sober again. Then it was back to the mill for him.

Most of Coakley's playmates in the guardhouse were insurgent prisoners that we had picked up out on the island. I tell you, the sentries sure did hate those goo-goos. I don't know why we called 'em goo-goos, but all the soldiers did.

"*Por qua* you *habla* me goo-goo?" one of the Filipino prisoners asked the sentry one day. The sentry didn't know, and didn't feel like startin' any tea-table conversation, so he just started to give that goo-goo a clout on the snoot, but the native begins to holler, "Me much *amigo;* me much *amigo!*" and the sentry lets him alone.

But Coakley, he is friendly with everybody, and he can savvy Spanish pretty well, so it isn't long before he is gettin' along fine with the goo-goos.

One of the natives we had in prison was a leader of a little insurgent band. His family used to bring him baskets of fruit and fresh coconuts to eat. The guards would inspect them and then pass them in, and Coakley

would always come in on the feast. One day he started to eat a banana and bit on something hard. He didn't let on he had found something, but when nobody was lookin' he examined what he had found. It was a message written on onion-skin paper and folded tight and stuck into the banana. Coakley took one look at it and asked permission to be taken to Captain Alexander, our company commander. The note gave instructions as to how the insurgent leader was to try and escape, and gave us the dope on where his band was back in the mountains.

The captain started out right away with a detachment of soldiers, and Coakley was one of them. His confinement ended right then. The insurgent band was camped high up in the mountains at a place that could be reached only by a single steep trail along a precipice. At the top of the trail they had a sentry, and farther on they had built some bamboo shacks.

When Captain Alexander and his party crept up they found the sentry asleep, with a Remington rifle across his lap. They managed to get so close to him they could see everything in the native quadrangle. Then the captain gave the signal. Corporal Adams shot the sentry, and the others poured a fusillade of fire into the insurgent camp. The Americans were cuttin' off the line of retreat and the only escape for the natives was to leap over the precipice into the jungle below. Not more than half a dozen got away. The band was practically wiped out, and we captured a number of rifles and a big supply of ammunition. One of our soldiers even found some of

our commissary boxes of corned beef that the goo-goos had pilfered from us.

We had been at Carigara a good while by then, and one or two fellows in the company had got married to Filipino girls in the village. There were a few others likewise who had what we called a "jaw-bone" wedding —meaning just a verbal agreement without any padre to fix 'em up. One of the men who had a Filipino wife was a private named Light, and Mrs. Light was a devout Catholic. She caught on to the fact that the priest of the church in Carigara was at the bottom of a plot to kill all the Americans there. He was to watch for a chance to take the Americans by surprise, and then to give the signal by ringin' the church bells in a certain way. That would bring the insurgents down out of the hills to make an attack.

When Light told Captain Alexander what was goin' on we began to get busy. Extra ammunition was brought up and opened, and the sentries were doubled. Then the captain and one of his lieutenants and Sergeant Small each buckled on two six-shooters and made for the church. They marched right up to the altar while the services were goin' on and charged the priest with the plot. He was so surprised to be found out that he gave himself away, and was immediately arrested, and the bells were fixed so they couldn't be rung. And that was the end of that plot.

The insurgent bands on Leyte never were particularly strong, and it was not long before they decamped to the island of Samar. Now that we didn't have much to do,

everybody spent their time hollerin' for pay day. With all the mix-up of troops bein' shifted from place to place, we hadn't had any pay for four months, and nearly everybody was flat. I never cared much for gamblin', so I usually had a little money ahead. But I might just as well have gambled because I always had to loan it out and I was as flat as the rest. Some of the lads who had funds did a rousing business by puttin' it out at twenty per cent. interest, and the Chinese pawnshops worked overtime, too. Watches, jewelry, shoes—everything we had except our firearms—were being turned into cash.

After four months of this the steamer with the boodle came into port one evening, and then the paymaster worked almost all night makin' up the pay rolls. About two o'clock in the morning we got our four months' back pay. And right then the celebration started. There was one big rush for the dice and monte games, and another big rush for the saloons. I was with the second bunch. I drank everything that Carigara sold that night from goo-goo *vino* and Jap *sake* to Schlitz beer and good old Kentucky rye. That drinkin' bout went on all night and all the next day. By that time I had a bigger cargo aboard than I could handle, and I passed out cold. First the earth began to spin on its axis in one direction, then it would go into reverse and do it the other way. At last it came up and swatted me in the face. When that happened I toppled over in a vacant lot out on a side street. I could hear people goin' by and talkin' and the bugle callin' for retreat. But if the goo-goos had swept

down upon the city that night I couldn't have moved a finger to help save the occasion for Uncle Sam. The only thing wrong with me was that I couldn't move. Why, when a mosquito lit on my nose I couldn't even brush him off.

A while later somebody went over to the barracks and told them that a very drunken American soldier was spendin' the night in the vacant lot, and a committee from my outfit came out to bring me in. I could talk to them, probably not very coherently, but I couldn't move, so they picked me up and carried me to the barracks.

That was the first and last time that I was ever soused right up to the gills. I had a hangover from that jamboree that lasted for a week. And the hangover lasted so long that I said to myself, "Never again." I never claimed to be a teetotaler, but after that I always had a limit.

I have to hand it to Captain Alexander for the way he treated us chaps. He was a fine old regular army officer, and he knew darned well that when a company of soldiers don't have any pay for four months there's goin' to be one grand blowout when they do get it. All slight misdemeanors were overlooked by the captain, and nobody got sent to the mill unless he started a row. In fact, by good luck and the grace of God, in all my soldiering career I somehow managed to escape the guardhouse. Occasionally I got so close to it that my coat tails fanned it, and I had plenty of extra K. P., but that was all.

Well, when I came to after that grand bust I found

that the mail had come in with the pay roll and there was a letter from my mother. She told me my brother Bill had enlisted in the army six months after I got in and was now on his way to the Philippines with the Twenty-ninth Infantry. After I left home he had gotten the enlisting fever worse than ever and went to the recruiting officer again. You see, it was that hand of his that held him up, the hand with the thumb and finger gone. Finally the recruiting officer said:

"Take hold of my arm and squeeze."

Well, Bill almost pinched the deuce out of him.

"You'll do, kid, you'll do," the officer said as he winced and rubbed his arm. So two weeks later Bill was on his way out, too. I sure was lookin' forward to seeing him.

Mother also wrote that Brother John was in the army somewhere. He had written her a letter from the State of Washington telling her he had enlisted, but he didn't say where he was goin'. That was the last letter any of us ever had from John. Bill got to the Philippines all right and I had mail from him from the island of Gymros. There was one time when I had a chance to go there and see him, but as luck would have it his post was quarantined for cholera. We wrote back and forth a lot, and made inquiries of different outfits about John. But we never found him there.

CHAPTER IV

THE MASSACRE OF BALANGIGA

Out of Company C only Four Men Survived—Hightower and the Chinaman's Pigtail—The Devil's Own Beverage—Pay Nights and Poker Sharks.

OLD TIM O'BRIEN was a great lad at spinnin' yarns. Says he.

"Did you ever hear the story of Lieutenant Kilbourne of the signal corps? A fine, courageous man he was. One day the goo-goos had broken a telephone wire and cut our communications with headquarters. But that don't bother Kilbourne atall. He just shinned up that telegraph pole, thumbed his nose at the goo-goos, and begorra if he didn't fix the wire right in plain sight o' the enemy, with bullets cracklin' round his ears like popcorn. The *insurrectos* had sent enough bullets in his direction to wipe out a company, but the Almighty was with Kilbourne and niver a hair was singed. He got the Congressional Medal of Honor for that show, too.

"An' did ye ever hear about the massacre of Balangiga? That was over on Samar, too, and it was as bloody a rumpus as iver I seen. It was the result of a plot. Up to then everything seemed to be jake between the soldiers and citizens and officials of the town. But

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their friendliness was all a fake. The goo-goos were simply gettin' set to wipe out the Americanos, and their spies watched every movement we made. Sure an' you wouldn't believe it, but the local padre was one of the ringleaders. And when the zero hour came he used his church bells for a signal, and the insurgents swarmed down upon us.

"They sure enough picked the right time. We were all at mess and none of us even had our guns. That was because everything had been so friendly. A bunch of Filipinos had been hangin' round outside with their *bolos* hid under their clothing. When those church bells started to peel they rushed the guards and knifed 'em. Others poured in from the town and from the jungle by the hundreds. Yes, and bejabers the troops were cut off from their rifles and ammunition and the Filipinos charged right into the mess hall for a massacre.

1633

"It sure was a bloody party. All the soldiers had for weapons to fight them goo-goos with their *bolos* and rifles were mess knives and table legs. But they sure went to it like the O'Briens and the Finnigans, and the treacherous *insurrectos* were goin' down all around with their heads bashed in and with ordinary table knives run through their gizzards. Our Company C men bumped off more of the Filipinos than the full strength of their own outfit.

"One hospital sergeant who was entirely unarmed managed to kill plenty of the goo-goos. He was late coming to the mess and they cut him off, all alone, in the little house which served for an emergency hospital

and dressing station. They trapped him, and all he had to fight back with was a long-handled shovel. But when a man knows his life is at stake, he usually can give a fairly good account of himself. He killed seven of them before they cut him down with their *bolos*.

"Back in the mess hall where the mêlée with knives and table legs versus *bolos* and rifles was goin' on, our boys fought it out to the last ditch. But the odds were too heavy against them. The *insurrectos* kept gittin' them one by one and drivin' them against the back windows. Finally there were only a few of thim left. Then a miracle happened. To their astonishment, they saw rifles and ammunition belts droppin' down among them, as though sent down from heaven. It shows how it pays to treat people right. There was a native lad who had been workin' as a bootblack around our camp. The soldiers had treated him fine and he knew nawthin' about the treacherous plot of the townspeople and natives from the surrounding jungle. But he could see with half an eye that his American friends were being massacred. He slipped in among thim insurgents, who av course paid no attention whatever to him because he looked like one of thimselves. Knowin' his way around the camp, he got to the storeroom where the ammunition was kept, right behind the mess hall. Then he began throwin' rifles and ammunition belts out of the window, hopin' they would fall into the hands of the American soldiers. They did, and immediately the men who were still alive and fightin' made a rush for the guns. Bucklin' on the ammunition belts, they formed thimselves into a

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sort of square, and squad by squad started retreatin' toward the shore. One squad would keep up a heavy fire while the other dashed back. Then the other would get set for a few volleys while the rest caught up with thim.

"Only four Americans came through that fire and reached the beach. Every other man in Company C, including all the officers, was killed and wounded. Those four jumped into a boat and pushed off. The Filipinos got boats, too, and started after them. But our boys were much better with their rifles when it came to movin' targets, and they finally managed to pull across the strait that separates the islands of Samar and Leyte. Then they gave the alarm to another American garrison, but when the relief force got to Balangiga the town was deserted. The *insurrectos* had all taken to the bush. But the grim spectacle that met their eyes was enough to turn thim relief troops into wild divils. They found the bodies of the massacred Americans mutilated in most atrocious manner. It was too horrible for description. The fanatical Filipinos had stripped the clothes off the soldiers, disemboweled thim with their *bolos*, and then poured them full of jungle beans, which they knew the Americans did not like.

"Well, right after the massacre, General 'Jakie' Smith was assigned to command the military forces on the island of Samar. He was the man for the job, too. After a general shakedown and investigation, some of the ringleaders of the plot were cornered and sentenced to life imprisonment in Bilibid Prison at Manila. Gen-

eral 'Jakie' issued a ninety-day proclamation ordering all av thim islanders to come in from the country districts to his concentration camps in the town. He promised 'em they'd be fed from the army commissary until the insurrection was over, and he announced that anybody who failed to come in would be treated as an enemy.

"Hundreds of Filipinos came in, but a lot, of course, didn't take General 'Jakie' at his word. When the ninety days were up every available troop was sent out scouting. With 'Remember Balangiga' as their battle cry, they hunted down the insurgents as though they were so many wild animals. That ended the days of revolt on the island of Samar."

One morning a lot of us were out hackin' at the bamboo and undergrowth with our *bolos* and axes. We had set down on the ground to rest and spin yarns for a bit, when Tim O'Brien let out a yell that was a real blood-curdler.

"Holy Saint Patrick," he hollers, "looka that snake!"

Everybody scattered, and then looked up to where Tim was pointin' into a tree. Then someone threw a club, and down came a bright green snake about seven foot long, one of the most venomous variety in the Philippines.

We actually saw very few snakes, but we had lizards with us all the time. There was one they called the *tuckee.* You'd hear it goin' "Tuck, tuck, tuck, whir," in all the houses. Then the Chinamen used to keep lizards to catch cockroaches, just like we go in for cats

to get rid of mice. What we did our best to steer clear of over in the Philippines were the tarantulas and centipedes. One night after we had all turned in a tarantula crawled over one of the boys and bit him on the lip. Another rookie was bitten on the arm, and both of them had a long session in the hospital as a result.

We had one private—a big, rawboned fellow from Tennessee named Hightower—who got so he was a regular boarder in the guardhouse. He had been out in the Philippines ever since the trouble started, and he was a fine soldier with a good record, but how that lad could punish the liquor! The other fellows liked him and hated to see him get in trouble, but it was hard lookin' after him. I was detailed to go downtown one night and bring him home before he got in too much devilment.

"Run along, kid," he tells me, when I found him.

I hadn't been in the army three years for nothin'. I figured I was just as big as he was, even if the fever had taken a lot of my strength.

"You come, or I'll take you," I said.

He came out of that saloon meek as a lamb, and we started for the barracks. Halfway home he came to and realized where we were goin'.

"Oh, hell," he says, stoppin' in his tracks, "I ain't ready to go in, I'm gonna have another drink!"

He turned around to beat it, and I stuck my foot out just in time. He tripped and went down like a load of brick, and I landed on his chest.

"You win," he says. "We go home."

Hightower was pretty well loaded one night when he

went into a Chinese restaurant and ordered some chicken. The chicken tasted extra good, so he ordered some more. It wasn't ready as quick as he thought it should be, and he got up and went out to the kitchen to hurry up the Chink. And what he saw out there made his eyes run right out on stems. It was a great big monkey carcass on the meat board, with the Chinaman cuttin' little cubes of meat off it, the way his first order had been cut up.

Hightower let out a roar and grabbed the Chinaman by the pigtail.

"You lowdown yellow heathen, —— —— ——!" he hollered, "I'll learn you how to feed me monkey meat."

Then the battle started. The restaurant keeper began to squeal for help, and there were Chinks comin' from every direction, but they couldn't stop Hightower. He grabbed up a chair and started to let fly at the Chinamen one at a time or in bunches, whichever way he could do the most damage. It's a question which he damaged worst—the dishes or the Chinks. He finished by gettin' hold of a carvin' knife and amputatin' the queue of the bird who'd dished up that monk. He stuck the queue in his pocket and was just walkin' out the door when he bumped square into the officer of the day. You see, somebody evidently had given the alarm and called out the guard.

"What's goin' on here?" says the officer of the day.

"Nothin' much, sir," says Hightower, who had got pretty well sobered up in the fracas, "I ordered chicken

and a damned Chink served me monk, and we—well, we just had a little argument, sir!"

"Argument, huh?" says the officer of the day, catchin' sight of one end of the pigtail hangin' out of Hightower's pocket. "And what's this?"

"Oh, I just bought that to-day as a souvenir," Hightower says offhand.

The Chink catches sight of it and begins to squeal again.

"Him catchum my pigtail," he screeches, "Melican soldier cuttee him off."

Well, Hightower couldn't talk his way out of that, so off he went to the "mill" for another three months.

I also served quite a long session in Manila. They quartered us just outside the walls of the old city in what were known as the Spanish Malata Barracks. Inside the walled city, at Fort Santiago, they had an artillery outfit. Did you know that the British once ruled here? I didn't, but while in Manila I found out that for two years the British Union Jack flew over Fort Santiago. That was back in the 1760's. But the Spanish drove them out again.

Life was a bit different now that we were out of the jungle and no longer chasin' guerrillas. We used to see Aguinaldo, most famous of all the Filipino insurgents, taking life easy in a foxy victoria behind a pair of prancin' ponies. Manila didn't know what an automobile was in those days. Unless we walked we had to use little buggies drawn by ponies, or big two-wheeled carts hauled lazily by sleepy water buffalo.

Although we no longer had to do any fightin', there was plenty of work for us. You see, some six hundred American school-teachers had been sent out from the States. But they couldn't find any pupils to teach. So soldiers were given the job of hikin' round from house to house, draggin' the kids out from under the beds and from behind the furniture. But schoolin' wasn't the only thing the goo-goos needed. The Spanish may have been classy people, but they didn't worry much about encouragin' their little brown brothers to keep Manila clean. Our troops had done a great deal before my arrival in the Islands, but that wasn't sayin' much. When you went through the streets you still needed a clothespin on your nose, despite the fact that before we reached Manila our noses had gotten accustomed to some pretty advanced smells.

I understand the walls of Manila have been torn down now. But they were there in my day, with a thirty-foot moat just outside. That moat was just one huge cesspool. So it's no wonder there were so many epidemics. Why, you couldn't throw a stone from the wall without rousin' enough mosquitoes to give malaria to a whole regiment of soldiers.

Well, when our wild crowd first came into Manila from the jungle you can imagine how keen they were for a lark. I recall one night when the guards had to be called out twenty times to keep the peace. There were soldiers gettin' into rough-and-tumble fights all over Manila.

One of our worst trouble makers was a tough gazabo

named "Butch" Walker. He was always getting what the British call "blotto." I really believe that chap was at least half lit from the time we first landed in Manila until we returned to the States. I recall one week when he was up for trial three times. Pretty soon it became a regular part of his routine. You see, Butch Walker had acquired the habit of drinkin' native *vino,* which is the devil's own beverage made out of something that looks like a mixture of alcohol, rat poison, and tobacco juice. At any rate, when an American gets three drinks of that under his belt he is ready to join the monkeys and swing around by his tail in the tree tops.

Once Walker was under arrest for knocking into a baby carriage when he was under full sail, and scatterin' its contents, baby and all, pretty much over the street. The major read off the charges and Butch, still in a daze, promptly said, "Guilty."

"Walker," the major spoke up, "what did you want to turn over that carriage for? Don't you know you might have killed that poor little baby?"

"Baby?" says Walker, "what baby? I never seen no baby, nor no baby carriage nuther."

"But you just pleaded guilty," added the major.

"Oh, hell," said Walker, forgettin' he was talkin' to the major, "I didn't hear what the charges was. I just plead guilty because I knew I'd get stuck in the mill no matter what I plead."

That goo-goo *vino* was sure red-hot dynamite. I recall one Yankee officer who went right off his nut from it. So wild did it make that hombre that he ran amuck,

pumpin' right and left with his hand artillery. He was just buzzin' bullets at every one of his old pals who tried to stop him. The commander of the post had to repeat his orders three times before the men would fire and actually take aim at that locoed officer. His men had liked him, but unluckily the only way they could stop him was to shoot him down.

The majority of the boys used to be fairly conservative and just order beer when they went out on their tea parties. A few would drink their whisky clear. Some liked another native drink called *tuba,* made from the juice of the coconut tree. It's sweet and rather like our cider. But the goo-goos let it ferment, and then put a little red bark in it to give it a foxy flavor and a come-on color. Then they would sell it to us for two "clackers," or two Spanish cents, a glass. This *tuba* would make you just as blotto as any applejack you ever saw. But it had the special disadvantage of leaving you with a nasty hangover.

Of course, life where men live cut off from association with their women folks back home is surrounded by temptations. But this only strengthens the character of most of them in the long run. The fellows who didn't amuse themselves drinkin' hard liquor had plenty else to take up their time. Card playin' and gamblin' were goin' on constantly. Three or four nights after pay day all the money in the garrison would be in the hands of half a dozen fellows, usually the same half dozen, too. Then that gang of highbinders would battle it out until the next pay day. But in all my soldierin', I knew only

two genuinely successful gamblers in Uncle Sam's army, both of 'em sergeants. These two birds could have had commissions if they'd wanted to. Maybe they could have wound up as majors or colonels, because they were men of brains and ability. But they actually made more in cold hard cash month after month, by gamblin', than any general earned. You see, if they had been commissioned officers they couldn't have played cards with the enlisted men. So they preferred sticking to the ranks.

One of these chaps, named Curry, owned property in the U. S. A. from coast to coast. He had real estate in San Francisco, Chicago, and Philadelphia, all bought out of his poker winnings. He was one of the shrewdest players we had, and after the first grand elimination set-to following the monthly walkin' of the ghost, when the money would be in the hands of the six or eight so-called sharks, then Curry would clean up on them. Sometimes he would rake four or five hundred dollars out of the pot in one night—which is considerable money to win from enlisted men—as you will agree.

Of course, a lot of my buddies used to hang around the Chink gamblin' places. Those slant-eyed Mongolians had all kinds of tricks up their sleeves for gettin' our pesos. For instance, the government paid us in gold. The Chinks used to get twenty-dollar gold pieces and cut out some of the gold and plug it up with lead. They'd actually give us twenty-two dollars in change for one of our twenty-dollar gold pieces, and then, after taking out some of the precious metal, they would

cleverly disguise the lead which they put in and pass the gold pieces on to other soldiers.

Whenever we couldn't think of anything else to do with our money we could always go down and lay some bets on the cock fights which were all the rage in those days. There was one cock fight I'll never forget. A goo-goo had a rooster and a Chinaman had one also. Both of them were equipped with sharp, knife-blade spurs. The bets were laid. The mob gathered round. The roosters were turned loose at each other, and one of them, quick as greased lightnin', made a pass at the other with his razor-sharp spur. He dodged back and then got in another haymaker, and the recond rooster tumbled over in his death convulsions. But he wasn't so far gone as we all thought. As he lay there on his back, half dead, he managed to give one terrific stroke, and drove his steel spur right down through the back of the first rooster. They both died. But the one that started out to be the winner croaked first.

Of course, there was a big row between the goo-goo and the Chink. According to the customs of the country, everybody shouted and argued until we thought it was going to wind up with a free-for-all fist fight. There was one little colored soldier standin' in the crowd, named Willie Burns. Wherever there was a cock fight, there you would always find Willie. He was a pint-size little mulatto and didn't look much over sixteen, but that boy sure could fight. Well, when they took the decision away from the cock he had bet on Willie went right off the tip end and lit into everybody. He could use his fists,

and he could bite and claw like a cornered hyena. It took six other fellows to hold him down. Willie-boy cut up such a fuss that they clapped him in the mill. Then next day when the charges were read against him that he had attacked half a dozen fellows, all of them nearly twice his size, nobody would believe it, and Willie was turned loose again.

Of course, there were lots of colored soldiers. They could fight and they could also play the fool. I knew some of them who had been in the campaign against Aguinaldo. One of these was a little bow-legged sergeant named Powell. I guess maybe that boy had seen more soldierin' than any darkey in America. When I was in Washington after the World War I found him in the State Department workin' as a messenger. One day out in the Islands he saw one of his pals, a big black infantryman, spin round like a top. He was shot square in the neck, with blood spurting through the holes where the bullet had entered and gone out. Without losing no time, Powell put his two hands over the wounds and held them there, keepin' the big fellow from bleeding to death, until the doctor arrived.

There was another colored trooper in I Company of the Twenty-fourth. His name was Dave Fagin, and he was a bad nigger from way down South. When he got into a jam and finally was released from the mill, he turned renegade, shoved off into the bush, and became leader of a band of guerrillas. He gave himself the title of General and lorded it over a lot of the goo-goos until the surrender of Aguinaldo. When the jig was up

for the other insurrectionist hands, this cutthroat gang came in and offered themselves up.

"Yes, but where is Fagin?" the American officers asked.

"We bring him to you!" the Filipinos said.

A week later, sure enough, in they came with a black woolly head on a pole. Fagin hadn't been very lucky picking his gang. They had been head hunters from the Igorot country.

We used to see Igorots on the streets in Manila occasionally. They are still pretty tough customers, and to this very day some of them just can't resist the temptation to slice off somebody's head for a souvenir. Our people found all kinds of uncivilized tribes in the Islands. I recall one tribe that had the cheery little habit of burying in an ant hill any enemy captured, and then lettin' the ants do the rest. There was a lieutenant in the Twenty-seventh Infantry who found out just what it was like. The natives took him prisoner when he was out scoutin'. They tied him hand and foot and then half buried him in one of those ant hills. Some of those ants out there are an inch long and their bite is like a red hot iron.

The rescue party that went out to look for the officer happened upon the ant hill and found him just about half dead. Although he did get well his hair turned pure white after that experience. Still, there are people who say your hair will not turn white from fear.

It took me twenty-nine days to cross the Pacific on the return voyage from the Philippines. The good old

Golden Gate sure looked mighty fine. When we got ashore all the rounders in the outfit staged a grand celebration down along San Francisco's famous old Barbary Coast. In those days the Barbary Coast was one tough locality. I took a look at it and then got my discharge pronto, and made tracks for old Indiana.

They hooked three or four coaches of us on a heavy train bound for Chicago. Scarcely an hour out of San Francisco we were shunted on a siding to let a westbound flier go by. A colored porter had gone up ahead to throw the switch. But that nigger sure was careless. He didn't throw it, or at any rate got all mixed up, and that flier thundered right off the main line onto the siding and crashed into us at full speed.

I happened to be leanin' out of the window at the time. Suddenly I saw the headlight of the other train comin' straight for us. Luckily, I dodged back just in time to keep from havin' my head snapped off against the window. The coaches up ahead of us were smashed to matchwood, and the two engines on our train and the one on the down-coming flier were reduced to junk and their crews killed. Not enough of either train crew was left to get the dead out of the wreckage, so we soldiers looked after that.

When the porter saw what he had done he didn't wait for any inquest. He just beat it. When we got to Kansas City we saw in the newspapers that he had been found. Whether they strung him to the nearest telephone pole or not, I don't know. Anyhow, the wreck was all his fault. I recall that one of the conductors said

the engineer was to blame. The engineer's brother happened to be a member of the train crew and overheard the remark. The next thing we knew the two of them were in a terrific fight, and goin' end over end down the embankment.

Other members of the train crew were runnin' around looking for someone who could tap out telegraphy. One of our lads who had been in the Islands with the signal corps volunteered. He shinned up a pole, just took a chance on which line to cut in on, then sent out messages for help. As luck would have it, the wire he tapped happened to be connected with some big brokerage firm two thousand miles away in Chicago. But they quickly relayed the message on to the railroad authorities.

In March, 1904, I landed back home. Brother Bill was still soldierin' in the Islands. Nothing more had been heard from John. We all wondered what had become of him. I spent a while with my mother and two sisters, but life seemed darned slow on Indian Kentuck Creek after all I'd seen. The army fever was in my blood. I felt just like a lot of other fellows after their first hitch.

"To hell and be damned with the army," they say at first. "I'd rather be a hobo with a tin bill, pickin' gravel with the chickens for a livin'."

Yes, that's what they say. But in about three months they nearly all come breezin' back to the old outfit. Everybody joshes 'em and asks 'em how the tin bill worked. And now I too began to think of my old gang

and long for the army. It's a glorious life. You can't beat it. But I'd had enough of the Philippines and the tropics. No more snakes and monkeys and goo-goos for me.

One day I saw in a local paper where the Third Infantry, stationed in Ohio, was to be shifted to Alaska. So I nailed a rattler, buzzed over to Columbus, the headquarters of the regiment, and joined up for my second hitch. In jig time they put me in G Company and in a few days we were off for Frisco, and bound for the Land of the Midnight Sun.

CHAPTER V

ALL ABOARD FOR THE NORTH POLE

Along the Trail of '98—Shooting the Rapids of the Yukon—We Get Acquainted with the Sourdoughs of the Klondike—On Down the River to the Land of the Midnight Sun.

ALTHOUGH I'd been round a bit by now and considered myself a fairly wize gazabo as a result of my hitch in the Philippines, there was still considerable that I didn't know.

"Say, what sort of place is this here Alaska that we're bound for?" I asked the fellow in the bunk next to me on the transport. He was a short stocky boy, named Hagan, as happy-go-lucky a buck as ever juggled a gat in this man's army. His father was a Mick. His mother was a "Deutscher." But he had made his official entry into this life down on the island of Santo Domingo. So I figgered he must know plenty about geography.

"Just ice and Eskimos," he said. "Nothin' but ice and Eskimos. Yep, boy, we got to live in them there igloos, and all we're agoin' to have to eat is whale blubber and walrus. It ain't so bad after the first year or two. Then you get used to it and never want no more turkey or apple pie or sweet potatoes or watermelon."

Well, this Hagan chap saw that I took it all down, hook, line, and sinker. So from then on he fed me right up to the ear lobes with stories about ice and igloos and polar bears. What with dysentery and fever in the Philippines, I'd got my fill of soldiering in the tropics. Here this bird was making out Alaska to be worse still. So I began to kinder hanker for the old home down on Indian Kentuck Creek. But I know a lot more about Alaska now! I'm what they call a sourdough up in that country. And in all my thirty-three years of accredited time there wasn't anything anywhere that could beat those four hitches I put in up in Alaska. Yes, and what's more, I'd be willin' and glad to go right back to that North Country again to-morrow.

I liked it right off the bat. The weather was fine as we made our way up the gorgeous Inside Passage. We were headed for a place called Skagway, so they said. Just before we reached it the ocean narrowed down to a great fiord, marked Lynn Canal on the map. As we steamed along it we had a high mountain range close by on either side of the ship. I pretty nigh put my neck out of kilter peering up at them. Down near the water they were covered with spruce trees, with trees even bobbin' right out of the cracks of the rocks. Up on the peaks there was nothin' but snow and ice. There was water shootin' over precipices in a hundred places, and big glaciers comin' right down to the edge of the ocean. Every time the steamer would blow its whistle a piece of ice would break off a glacier and crash into the sea with a roar like a salvo of artillery. When it bobbed to

the surface again there would be another iceberg. It sure was grand scenery. I'd never seen anything like that back in old Indiana, nor even out in the Philippines. These posters that tell you to "Join the Army and See the World" are not so far wrong at that. I was hangin' over the rail drinkin' in all them there fine sights when I heard a yell up ahead:

"Whales!"

Now, ever since I was a youngster goin' fishin' in Indian Kentuck Creek there was one thing I always wanted to see. That was a whale. I had crossed the whole blamed Pacific Ocean twice without even catching a glimpse of one. But here in Lynn Canal, right next to the glaciers, we ran smack into a whole fleet of them. They were cuttin' all kinds of capers and monkeyshines round the ship. We boys regarded them as a sort of reception committee, welcoming us to the Far North.

Back in 1904 I guess I'd never even heard of a submarine. Of course, I heard of them plenty thirteen years later when I crossed to France. And the first thing I thought of then was this trip up Lynn Canal. Well, you know, once in a while during the World War some ship would ram a submarine, and that's exactly what happened up here in Lynn Canal one day. A ship ran right into a whale, and it bobbed to the surface belly up.

Maybe you also heard tell of how one of those German submarines came all the way across the Atlantic in 1918 and snapped off some of our cables on the bottom of the ocean? Well, one of these live submarines up around Alaska tried the same trick. He got all wound

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up in the cable on the floor of the sea between Seattle and Skagway, with his jaws locked right round it. He thrashed and thrashed until he put the cable out of order. But he couldn't let go, and he drowned right where he was. Uncle Sam had a ship up along the Alaska Coast called the *Burnside* that did nothin' except lay cable and keep it in repair. It let down grapplin' hooks and pulled up the biggest whale they ever saw in those parts.

The transport dropped some of us at Skagway, then pushed on around through Bering Sea to St. Michael and Nome with the others. My crowd was headed for Fort Egbert, way up where the Yukon turns north of the Arctic Circle. Our outfit consisted of G and H companies of the Third Infantry with a Major Plummer in charge of the whole outfit and Captain Russell Langdon in command of my company. Langdon not only was a superb officer, but he was quite a scholar, too. That boy knew all there was to know about every great military campaign from the time of Thothmes and Rameses down to Stonewall Jackson and Sitting Bull. As a matter of fact, the American army has officers second to none. The West Pointer can't be beaten. He knows his profession, is as reliable as Old Faithful geyser, and about as efficient as mortal man can be. I guess I ought to know, too, because I have served under a lot of them and under every conceivable circumstance. I don't know what would happen if we hadn't had officers of that type as the nucleus for our army during the World War. You hear lots of folks say, "Well, just what did the

West Pointers do during the World War?" I'll tell you what they did. They were delegated to serve in far more important places than the firing line. They had to create our army, and they did it. It would have been well-nigh fatal to the service to have put all our best trained military men where it would have been so easy for a little lead bullet to knock 'em off. They had to train the millions who were called to the colors.

Well, our two companies parked there at Skagway for several days until trains could be gotten ready to take us over the mountains to what they call the "Inside." This wait was jake with us because we got in a lot of fishin'. We also fell in with some of the old-time sourdoughs, who told us tales of the big gold rush, which had only been over a short time. Here it was that I first learned how the name "sourdough" originated. It was because they were prospectin' and doin' their own cookin' and they always had to keep a chunk of dough from every batch of bread or flapjacks they made and let it sour so they could use it for yeast for the next batch of bread.

Those old boys could spin yarns by the hour. They told us about the mobs that used to mush through Skagway and on over Chilkoot Pass to the Yukon and on down to the Klondike. But the star yarn in Skagway is about a famous swindler called "Soapy" Smith. Soapy, so they said, was the head of a gang of a hundred or more bad men who fleeced the miners. But Soapy finally got his. He lifted three thousand dollars' worth of gold dust off a young miner who had just come out from the

Klondike. A committee of four citizens called on him and told him to give it back. When Soapy failed to fork over they were lucky enough to get the drop on him, and then they pumped him full of lead.

Those of us who had plenty of jack in our jeans went out for a meal of real Alaskan grub at a famous boarding house. The lady who ran the place was a Mrs. Pullen. She had landed at Skagway during the gold rush, with nothin' in the world but her husband and three little boys and seven dollars in cash. Her husband died on the trail. But she had plenty of grit and began to work as a cook. Soon she had her own boarding house, which is now famous throughout the Far North. But Mrs. Pullen had something more than knowledge of how to cook. One of her boys got drowned up there, but the others she raised the way they should go. One went to West Point as the first cadet from Alaska. Nearly fifteen years later, in France, I heard plenty about the big stunts Dan Pullen was getting away with in the World War. He was the chap that Pershing called "a one-man army."

One day while some of us were on the waterfront havin' a shot at salt-water fishin' for flounder and sea robins, a yell went up:

"Come on, you hoboes! All aboard for the North Pole!"

The train for the Inside was ready. So we all piled on board with our bags. The whistle blew and up we started into the steep Alaskan mountains. On the way the train crew told us a bit about the forty thousand

men and women who had mushed over that precipitous trail back in the winter of '97 and '98. Most of them made it on foot. Probably you have seen pictures of it. We passed Dead Horse Canyon, where most of the horses used to get fagged out and keel over. Five thousand or so dropped over the precipice at this one spot.

At the top of the mountains, at White Pass, the train pulled up, and there we saw the Stars and Stripes flying side by side with the Union Jack. Standing in front of the little station were men in about the handsomest uniforms I'd ever seen. This was my first look at the famous Royal Northwest Mounted Police. Those tall, handsome fellows, with their red coats and black breeches with red stripes, and their snappy boots and spurs, and their hard Western hats, sure were enough to knock your eye out.

"Gorblimey, but 'e's a 'andsome boy," says one of our gang.

It was that little runt, Glover. He was a Cockney from London who had spent a lot of his life rompin' about the world as a professional Tommy for old John Bull. But our soldiers get more pay, so he had switched over to Uncle Sam. That little Cockney had been at the Siege of Ladysmith, when the Boers took oxen and dragged "Long Tom," their big field gun, up the mountains to a commanding position and held off the British for days. But the Britishers, never to be outdone, sent back to the coast for a gun off a battleship that had the reach on Long Tom. They also must have had

good gunners, too. Their first shell came right down on Long Tom's headquarters and blew it off the map. Glover was wounded in the fighting and sent back to England. But the army life was in his blood, just as it's in mine, and here he was soldierin' with me, under the Stars and Stripes, up on the edge of the Arctic. We had all nationalities with us in those days.

What impressed me most about that little station on the Alaskan-Canadian border was that there were no fortifications. It somehow seemed to indicate that mighty good feelin' existed between Uncle Sam and John Bull.

Getting under steam again, our train coasted down the other side of the mountains, until we reached the lakes at the headwaters of the Yukon and passed right alongside the famous Miles Canyon and White Horse Rapids, where so many gold seekers lost their lives back in '98. At the town of White Horse the train pulled up. That place is the farthest up the river that the paddle steamers go, and one of them was at the docks waitin' for our crowd. It was the Yukon flatboat *Selkirk*. We stopped only long enough to switch from train to boat and then were on our way still deeper into the North.

We had about sixty-five men in our company. That paddle-wheeler *Selkirk* wasn't so big, so our two companies loaded it up to capacity and then some. Down the Yukon we started, swingin' along that mighty river for a hundred miles at a stretch without seein' a living thing. The high mountains were at our back now, and as we journeyed deeper and deeper into the Arctic the

country got flatter and flatter. It was just a great big empty land, covered over with thin evergreen forests with patches of fireweed here and there. Hagan had a book of poems in his kit, full of verses by a chap named Service, who sure did know how to describe this North Country.

After a while we came to a place where the river widened out into a large body of water that they told us was Lake LeBarge. Hagan read us a poem about this very lake. It was called, "The Cremation of Sam McGee," and told how a chap from sunny Tennessee died up here and was stuffed in the furnace of one of these river boats. Then when his pal opened the furnace door a little later on, the stiff sat up and ticked him off with:

> "For God's sake close that door;
> Since I left my home in Tennessee
> This is the first time I've been warm."

Since then I believe this chap Service has become rich on the royalties from the poems he wrote about the North. But in those days he had just written them and was still livin' in the Klondike ticklin' the ivories in some Malamute saloon. His poems certainly hit off that country to perfection. It's a strong country for strong men, and weaklings don't last long. I was soon to find out plenty about that.

A little farther on down the Yukon River we came to a place they called Five Finger Rapids. Five big rocks stuck up out of the river like the hand of a giant,

and the water roared between them. I've heard about the lady that was known as Lorelei. She was the wench who perched on a rock over along the Rhine, singin' snappy songs to the river sailors, causin' them to forget their job long enough to be shipwrecked. Well, these Five Fingers in the Yukon didn't need any blonde sittin' on them. They were fascinating and dangerous enough just as they stood. A lot of the gold seekers in the days of '98 smashed up on them. Hardly a day went by, during the big rush, but what a raft or boat ended its career on one of those fingers.

Floating down through that land of emptiness made a fellow feel like an explorer going into a region where no human being had ever been. Sometimes we'd see a bear on the bank. Then the captain would let out a terrific blast on the whistle, and you'd oughter seen Mr. Bruin skedaddle for the tall timber. Once we also saw big bull moose swimmin' across the river right up ahead. So I concluded, correctly too, that we were going into a country where there would be plenty of big game hunting. So far I hadn't seen any igloos or Eskimos, and the prospects looked O. K. for a good time.

Finally we rounded a bend in the river and up ahead saw a town we'd all heard of. It was Dawson City, capital of the Klondike, right on a point of land at the junction of the Yukon and Klondike rivers. It is in Canadian territory, and when we pulled up alongside the dock it was still at the height of its prosperity, crowded with gold seekers, gamblers, adventurous

women, and Indians. The whole burg seemed lined up on the river to welcome us.

The people kidded us a lot about being greenhorns, or chechahcoes. They were all sourdoughs, and proud of it. Well, the boys of the Royal Northwest Mounted Police took us in tow and showed us the sights. Dawson was thrown wide open to us and in a lot of places they wouldn't even let us pay for a thing. Pretty lucky that was, too, because prices in Dawson were sky high. For instance, eggs were a dollar apiece. One old-timer told me he hadn't laid eyes on a copper penny for six years, because a penny wouldn't even buy a look at anything up there. He saw one in my fist when I pulled out a handful of money.

"Give you a dollar for that," he said. "I'd kinda like to have it for a souvenir."

He got it, and I started out lookin' for more people who might want souvenirs. You see, a lot of old sourdoughs had been panning the Klondike and its tributaries ever since they came in at the time of the gold rush of '98. Some had made fortunes, and then lost 'em in the gambling halls, and made more fortunes and lost them too. Not all the gold was made out of mining, either. One sourdough told me how he had landed in Dawson with nothin' but a bag of beans and a sack of flour. He made the flour into bread and cooked the beans. Then he spread them thin to make bean sandwiches, which he proceeded to sell at a dollar a crack. They sold like hot cakes. He made enough to keep him goin' quite a while.

One chap told me about how one time all the miners were falling sick from scurvy. There was no vegetables left. Along came a sourdough, down the river on a barge, with a cargo of potatoes. The miners nearly mobbed him in their eagerness to buy, and he sold at a profit of over one thousand per cent. The miners ate peelings and all, and the acid helped drive off the scurvy.

Well, from Dawson we plodded on down the river in our old paddle-wheeler until we crossed the border and were in Alaska again. The next stop was Eagle City, on American soil, and just outside we pulled up at Fort Egbert, the farthest north American army post, away up on the edge of the Arctic.

"Everybody get busy and help unload!" came the order. You see, the open season on the Yukon is mighty short. So the captains don't stay long with their steamers. They want to make as many voyages as they can. So we worked right on through until two o'clock in the morning. But we had arrived during the season when it is daylight all twenty-four hours, and you couldn't hardly tell which was day and which was night. As we moved in the other garrison pulled out. There were good frame buildings, and at the edge of the fort was a garden, which made me sure we weren't going to have to live on blubber alone. "Do you know any more good fairy tales?" I asked Hagan, the chap who had been stuffin' me with cock-an'-bull stories about the North. The major appointed Micky Welsh and Johnny Purcell as head gardeners. They grew turnips as big as a three-

gallon bucket. I'll bet they're still talkin' about 'em. Everything grew to a huge size, right out in the open, except tomatoes, and they had to be raised under glass. I suppose you've heard about the chickens up there. When they brought the first ones in, it was during the summer. Because it was light all the time, the roosters never knew when to stop crowin' and the hens never knew when to stop laying. So they wore themselves out and all died. But before we got up there they had solved this problem by building big chicken houses, lit by electricity. During the summer they would chase 'em in there, and darken the windows for twelve hours out of each twenty-four. During the long winter nights they simply turned on the lights half the time.

They put us to erecting a lot of new buildings out of logs. My job was drivin' a team, and it was my first experience skinning mules. They were of the good old Missouri hardtail variety. I had a fairly complete vocabulary before I got to Alaska, but skinnin' mules gave me my postgraduate degree. The only lingo the Missouri hardtail knows is the kind that fogs the atmosphere. Old army men have a well-deserved reputation for heavy swearin'. But the Alaskan sourdoughs could give us cards and spades and skin us to a frazzle.

One of the structures we threw up was a big gymnasium. But we used it mostly for dances during the long dark winter. We all chipped in and sent out to Sears Roebuck for a flock of musical instruments. The company orchestra consisted of Private "Whoops" Hoops at the accordion, and Private "Melody" Mc-

Some of Woodfill's sourdough pals in the Land of the Midnight Sun, where he spent eight years at the farthest north American army post.

Perched on the pinnacle of a jagged Alaskan peak. Woodfill at the left. During his service along the Arctic Circle he became a great trail blazer and hunter, training which specially prepared him for his epic fight in the World War.

Mann at the harmonica. I've heard a lot worse music, too. Those bozos didn't know B flat from high C, but just the same they could get a lot of close harmony out of their instruments. But we were always shy on girls. Ah, there was the rub. You never saw any spinsters in that part of the world. When any girl was old enough to be married she was snapped up quicker'n you could bat an eye.

A few of the boys had brought their wives along. One of these was "Pop" Lurbi. He was the bugler, and no better bugler than Lurbi ever bugled a bugle. He had been the one picked out to blow taps over President McKinley's grave. But he was a versatile chap, was Lurbi. In addition to being the bugler, he was a barber. In those days it cost us two bits for a haircut and a dime for a shave. Ten per cent. of the barber's earnings always went to the company mess fund. Lurbi was Spanish, and a born gambler.

We had soldiers of every nationality in the army in those days, and still have. I knew Swedes, Irishmen, Moravians, Hungarians, and Portugee. And I'll never forget a big hulking Pole who breezed into headquarters one day.

"What's your name?" snaps the duty sergeant.

"Tzchulkowczski," says Mr. Pole.

"Great Jumpin' Jehoshaphat, and how do you spell it?"

The Pole proceeded to spill k's and w's and z's all over the premises until the sergeant was goggle-eyed

tryin' to catch 'em and put 'em all down. "It's Tzchulkowczski junior," added the Pole.

"Say, listen, Chulwhoozis," that sergeant growls. "Right here's where you drop the junior. There ain't no such critter in Uncle Sam's army. Yeh, and if you don't amputate a few of them x-y-z's in your name your chances of ever bein' anything from a corporal to a general are pretty slim."

We had a sergeant up there named Fritz Koenig, who had once been cashiered out of the German army. But he never would tell us much about that. He was a short, stocky Prussian, nearly sixty, straight as a totem pole, and a soldier who knew his game. Lickin' the new recruits into shape was his assignment. But instead of cussin' a blue streak, he used to get excited and ball his English up beautifully. I watched him superintend a bayonet drill one day. One rookie was havin' a deuce of a time. Just which was thicker, that rookie's skull or the old sergeant's German accent, it would be hard to say.

"Mein Gott, what a *dumkopf!*" he yelled in disgust. "Now vunce more. Ven I say fix, you fix noddings; but ven I say bayonets, *raus mit* 'em."

Max Bach was another German I soldiered with. He had been kicked out for talking too freely about the Kaiser. But Max still kept his *"hoch-der-Kaiser"* mustache. Max could get away with more beer than any man I ever saw. He used to raise a bottle to his lips and then shoot the works at one gulp. After a few bottles, he would roar out a lot of old German drinking

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songs. He had been a soldier for thirty years. I often wonder what happened to him during the World War.

Another rare bird in my outfit was a chap by the name of Gassula, or Nick the Greek as we knew him. He'd rather gamble than eat. Then after cleaning up, he would blow it all on the boys—if there were no girls. Nick the Greek was a regular devil of a fellow. The last I heard of him he had gone the way of all his countrymen, and opened a restaurant.

There were Dutchmen, too. Smart fellows, those Hollanders. I recall one who pulled off a great stunt in the World War during the Argonne drive. He put on a German uniform and crawled out into No Man's Land to reconnoiter. After getting the information he wanted he bumped into a lot of Germans on the way back. But that didn't faze him. He just told them they were surrounded and that he'd been sent out to get them in safely. He brought more'n a hundred back to the American lines. That Dutchman was one of the most decorated men of the whole war.

Well, you see I was serving with a new outfit up in the Far North and I never supposed I'd bump into my Philippine cronies there. But when you start soldiering you're liable to meet old pals wherever you go. One chap up in Alaska was a private who'd returned from the Philippines on the transport with me. Chronic dysentery had nearly got him in the Islands. He was so emaciated they had to grant him special permission in order to allow him to go to Alaska. But he said that if he was going to die, he wanted to die while serving in

the army. Well, six months after we got to Fort Egbert he began to put on weight and blossom out like one of them Alaskan turnips. A year later he tipped the scales just over two hundred. Naturally, he liked Alaska, and finally, after retiring from the army, he staked out a homestead near Skagway and became an Arctic farmer.

Alaska hit me just right, too. So much so that when the Tenth Infantry relieved the Third at the end of my two years, I shifted in order to stay on with the new outfit. When the Tenth came in a big yahoo slapped me on the back and nearly bowled me over.

"You red-headed son-of-a-gun," he hollered, "what'n hell are you doin' up here at the North Pole, Sam, old boy?" It was that wild-eyed chap, Hightower. None other. And I sure was glad to see him. Well, I hadn't seen old wild-man Hightower since the time he cut off the Chinaman's pigtail in Manila. There were no Chink pigtails to cut off up here in Alaska, but wherever you found Hightower there you found plenty of excitement. That chap could cut up capers on a cake of ice in the Arctic Ocean. Yes, and Hightower could give you a vivid description of the inside of every guardhouse in every post where he'd been stationed in the Philippine Islands and the U. S. A., and it wasn't long before he made the intimate acquaintance of the mill here at Fort Egbert in the Land of the Midnight Sun.

"Never saw anything of my brother John?" I asked Hightower. "Big tall quiet fellow, with a scar on the side of his face?"

No, he said, he had never run into any John Wood-

fill. You see, I used to ask about John in every new outfit I came across. But I never found hide nor hair of him. You find men in almost every outfit under assumed names, and sometimes I thought John might have done that. I never gave up hope of bumpin' into him somewhere.

CHAPTER VI

WE ATE ICICLES FOR BREAKFAST

Betting on the Break-up—Shooting It out with the Northwest Mounted Police—Down the Yukon on a Raft—The Catastrophe of Pete the Swede and His Cabbages—Eagle City at Seventy-two Below—And They Sawed off His Arms and Legs—"Caribou Liver All Same White Man's Liver."

WELL, the longer I stayed on the polar rim, the harder I fell for Alaska. At first I was worried about those cold winters I'd heard tell about. But luckily my first winter up there on the Inside was the mildest I was to encounter in my four hitches. The old sourdoughs complained of the "tropical" heat. The lowest it got was fifty-three degrees below zero. Well, I guess you'd hardly call that tropical, or even subtropical, but it isn't far from the truth to say that fifty below is only where it commences to get real cold up there in the Frozen North. I suppose it's because the air is so dry, and also because you are dressed for even fiercer cold than that. Believe it or not, I thought the thermometer was foolin' that first winter when I saw it slidin' down to thirty and forty below.

"Hell's bells, this here hain't nothin' but shirt-sleeve weather," the old sourdoughs would say.

Well, we didn't exactly go around in bathin' suits, but none of us suffered any from cold that first year. There were no fingers, nor ears, nor noses lost. But that first winter was just a teaser to what we ran into each year from then on.

The government knew just the right sorter clothes we needed for Alaska. With our heavy red wool underwear and thick woolen uniforms, we were ready for the mercury to drop right down out of sight. Our fatigue uniforms, which we wore when not engaged in military maneuvers, were canvas, lined with woolen blanketcloth. And for garrison duty we had the heaviest kind of woolen mackinaws. Our shoes were made of felt—you'd freeze your feet in leather shoes before trekking a hundred yards. Then for rough work and mushin' across country, we put on moose skin or elkskin moccasins over the felt, with two or three extra pairs of wool socks underneath. Our caps were made of muskrat fur. Well, when you're all dressed up in an outfit like that and lookin' like you weigh at least three hundred pounds, you don't have to do much worrying about the weather when it's only fifty below.

All that first winter we were kept busy building new log quarters, and it seemed no time at all until it was spring and everybody was bettin' on the hour when the ice break-up would start in the Yukon. The time when the ice goes out is one of the biggest holiday periods of the year in the section of Alaska that lies beyond the

coast range. During that short space of time nearly as much money changes hands on bets as changed hands when Uncle Sam bought Alaska from the Russians. The break-up comes during the first part of May—somewhere between the third and thirteenth—and everybody along that old Yukon River, from White Horse Rapids to Bering Sea, puts down bets on the exact day and hour when the ice will start to move in the particular place where they live. A lot of bets are even on the exact hour and minute. The way they tell for certain who is the winner is by fixing a wooden stake out in the ice so it will be in line with a particular spot on shore. The minute the stake moves from that original fixed line the official commencement of the break-up is on and the bets are paid.

It's a grand sight. You see, the ice in the Yukon freezes anywhere from three to ten feet thick, and when she breaks she groans and roars, and then big cakes pile up twenty feet high and more. After a bit, along comes a heavier cake, or a swifter current, and knocks the whole pile galley west with a crashing like thunder. This goes on for days. Then when most of the big ice has gone down stream the boats start to run, and you know summer is there. The days get longer and longer and you are shootin' at targets as late as ten o'clock at night, and even playing baseball at midnight.

We were always busy up there on the Arctic Circle and never had time to get lonesome, much, even though we were thousands of miles from civilization. For instance, one day it would be, "Lurbi's wife's got a baby.

So come on, boys, chip in for a present." Or another day it would be, "Two rookies have deserted and beat it for the Canadian border." But they didn't get far. The Redcoats of the Mounted picked 'em up at Forty Mile and turned 'em over to the Deputy U. S. Marshal, and for the next six months those unlucky rookies forfeited their pay and did plenty of K. P.

When there wasn't anything else excitin' we had a habit of droppin' in on those two gardeners, Micky Welsh and Johnny Purcell, to insist on their producin' something new in the line of food. Those lads didn't live with the rest of us in the barracks. They had a little cabin of their own in one corner of their garden. They had a cook stove and could cook up a fancy meal for visitors, if they were a mind to, and if you were lucky enough to be one of their pals. Of course, everybody kept on good terms with Micky and Johnny.

" 'Ow about a bit o' shootin', Sam?" Glover, the little Cockney, would ask when we were off duty. I liked that bloomin' Englishman, and often the two of us used to go out and do a bit of shootin' practice on the q-t. We would get a lot of extra ammunition from the supply sergeant and spend hours at a time on the target range, doin' experimental firing. In this way I learned a lot about shootin' that I never knew before, including some little tricks of sighting and range finding. I was beginnin' to know just what I could do with a rifle and what I couldn't.

The boys of the Royal Northwest Mounted sent a challenge down the river from Dawson for our best

marksmen to come up on the Fourth of July for a rifle shoot. And I'm here to tell you they sure did wallop the daylights out of us, even if it wasn't just their shootin' alone that beat us. The special entertainment they had arranged for the previous night was what put our rifle team on the blink. They pulled a big blowout for us, with plenty of hooch and an all-night dance.

"Have another little one, boys! Step right up and drink this one to the health of the President of the United States," they'd urge us. But our lads didn't need much urgin'. Comin' up stream to Dawson was a rare lark, and we nearly all made the most of it.

When it came time for the big shoot, next day, our boys were sober, all right. But did you ever try shootin' at small targets three hundred yards away, through a fancy sight on an army rifle, the mornin' after the night before? If so, you'll know you don't make a record worth writing home about. Well, it just so happened that I hadn't been doin' so much celebratin' as the others. I sorter smelled a rat. And then, since I'd left the Islands I'd been more or less off the liquid TNT. As a result, I was the only one of our army team that licked his opponent. The man they had put up against me is what the blood-and-thunder writers call "A rootin', tootin', shootin' son-of-a-gun." He had finished his enlistment in the Mounted Police and was havin' a shot at prospectin' up on Hunker or Eldorado or one of the other tributaries of the Klondike. He was the best shot in all that Klondike country. So they had sent out and brought him in to participate with their team. I only beat him by one

point, and those Royal Mounted boys trimmed our team to a fare-you-well.

We had made the river journey to Dawson by a Yukon steamer, but while there we ran into Eli Verue, the mail carrier and lumber contractor, who spent his time going back and forth along the upper reaches of the river. He said he was just ready to start a big raft of logs down stream to Fort Egbert.

"Any you fine shootin' champions wanta ride my logs?" he sang out.

It sounded like an adventurous stunt to us, so we all piled on. She was a big raft, approximately sixty feet wide and seventy feet long. We shoved off at crack of dawn from Dawson, pulled her out into midstream, and away we went. After a few hours sittin' there on those logs it began to get a bit tame and we wondered what we were goin' to do to pass all the time. Shortly after that we got an answer. The river narrowed a bit, the current got swifter and shot us into a reef. Right there was where we finished that raft ridin', perched up on a couple of big rocks. Leaving "Frenchie" Verue and his men to get her loose we finished the trip down stream to Eagle and the fort in two rowboats we were lucky enough to borrow from a woodchopper's camp.

But having little encounters with the river and gettin' upset in the middle of the Yukon became rather a regular thing. Sometimes a man would go through the ice and never be seen again, although usually somebody'd fish him out. One of the characters around Eagle City was old Peter Lundene. We called him the Big Swede.

He had staked a homestead across the river from Eagle City and made more money selling eggs and milk and vegetables to the citizens of the Far North than he ever had in the days when he spent all his time diggin' for gold. Well, so far as I know, the only time in his life that big Swede ever had a bath was when he fell into the river. At the time, he was rowin' a load of cabbages across from his "estate." One of his oars slipped, and when he tried to grab it out he went head first into the Yukon. A fellow on the Eagle side saw his spill and pushed out in a boat. But he couldn't get Peter to start for shore until he had rounded up his vegetables. You see, there's a short growing season in Alaska and cabbages are cabbages.

"Aye tank I bane fish 'em out first," he kept on saying.

Well, they finally got most of them, and then the man who had gone to the rescue brought Peter into the barroom where a bunch of us boys were playin' poker and shootin' Kelly pool. That was in October, and the old Yukon was just about ready to freeze over. Peter was so cold his false teeth were doin' a shimmy. So we just shot firewater into him until he warmed up. When he finally staggered out the door and went about his peddling, old Peter didn't know whether he was sellin' cabbages or straw hats.

The Yukon froze over early that second winter, and when the cold once set in she never let up. The mild season we had had the year before had fooled us all, and we weren't quite prepared for the way that mercury

did a nose dive to the bottom of the bulb. It turned out to be the coldest in the eight years that I spent along the Arctic Circle. We used so much fuel in our stoves that before the winter was half over we ran out of short wood, and this calamity came upon us right in the middle of the worst blizzard I ever went through. The old mercury zoomed down to sixty and then continued her toboggan. She hit seventy, and then seventy-two below, and parked right there. At the fort we were depend-in' on civilian teamsters who, when the blizzard struck us, just up and refused to go out after any more wood. So Captain Langdon called for volunteers.

"Aw, come on," a little buck private named Fagan says to me. "We need some fresh air, Sam."

Well, Fagan and I didn't exactly know what we were runnin' into. We just put on all the clothes we had and started off with a pair of mules. I never have seen such cold before or since. The snow was so dry that the steel sled runners stuck to it until it was as hard for the mules as it would have been pulling over sand. Then, too, they were bleedin' at the nostrils from the frosty air, and every half hour we had to stop and clean the ice balls away from their noses so they could breathe.

And you can bet we had hard enough work breathing ourselves. Our lungs felt like we were suffocatin'. We pulled down the flaps of our muskrat caps and fastened 'em under the chin, with another piece across the nose, so there was just one slit for the eyes and another for the mouth and nostrils.

"Betcha I'll raise a prime crop of whiskers for a

windbreak before we get into another winter like this," growled Fagan.

I had put on just about all the wool socks I owned, and for an extra precaution had padded out my elkskin moccasins with the straw packing that came around our bottled goods. That's the best way I know to keep out the cold.

Well, we got the wood, and then we went out for another load. After a while it didn't seem so cold. My feet and nose had been stinging and paining for a while. Then that began to disappear.

"Guess the cold's lettin' up," he remarked to Fagan.

We were still too green to realize that the way we felt simply meant we were freezing. Poor old Fagan's fingers and toes were frozen so bad he almost lost them, and most of my toenails dropped off. Some of the other fellows told us what to do after we got in. First we rubbed the frozen parts with snow, and then massaged 'em with coal oil to counteract the frostbite. If you try to thaw out too quick with the aid of heat, then your flesh turns black and infection is liable to set in.

My frozen toes seemed to be gettin' along all right, but my nose was givin' a lot of trouble. It was puffing up like a new brand of mumps, and I finally had to have the doctor lance it. A lot of the fellows took to growin' mustaches, thinkin they would be some protection from the cold. But that wasn't always a successful idea, either. Sometimes you would come in with nearly a pound of icicles hangin' on your whiskers.

Five men were frozen to death during that one win-

ter inside a radius of a hundred miles from our fort. Hightower came wandering into the barracks one day when I was nursing my nose.

"Hi there, Sam," he yells. "Come on, let's go to a funeral for a change."

A prospector had moseyed down out of the hills from his cabin beyond Mission Creek to get himself a new grubstake at Eagle City. He had only made two miles on the return trip to his diggin's when the cold got him. He must have stopped to light his pipe to warm himself up, because they found him frozen solid in a sitting position with his head bent over and his pipe in his hand. So they brought him in and buried him just that way.

After the big blizzard a second report came in to Major Plummer that another prospector had frozen to death in his cabin. The major sent out an old-time sourdough with a toboggan and dog team to bring him in. When the sourdough got there he found the prospector had frozen in a sprawling position, and the toboggan was too narrow to load him on. It didn't make any difference to the old sourdough. He just took a saw and amputated the arms and legs, arranged them all neatly on the sled, strapped 'em on, and came right along.

Old Peter Lundene had another close call that winter. He went out to look at his traps one day while it was snowing. He wasn't very far from his cabin, but the snow wiped out his trail and he took the wrong direction. After a bit he figured he was off the trail and got excited. Then he began goin' round in circles. The only way I

can figure out why a person does that is because he takes a slightly longer step with his right foot than he does with his left.

Well, the big Swede kept on walkin' the rest of that afternoon and all night long. He didn't dare stop for fear of freezing. Next morning he stumbled across a trail. But it was the one he had made the day before. He didn't realize that and kept circlin' round worse than ever, crossing his own trail several times. Every time he did this he thought it was the trail of somebody out lookin' for him and he would shoot off his rifle for a signal. On the afternoon of the second day somebody really went out to search for him. They heard his rifle shots and finally located him. Poor old Peter was half dead from walkin', and crazy with fright.

"Py Gott," he stuttered, "de whole damn woods bane full of snowshoe tracks, but aye never bane able to see nobody."

It wasn't only in winter that people got lost up there. One of the strangest cases was the disappearance of the wife of a man who used to come up to Alaska in summer to get material for writing stories. Hewitt was his name, I think. The two of them went out one time exploring back in the hills behind the fort. Mrs. Hewitt got tired and sat down on a rock to rest while her husband went on. They both had rifles and were crack shots, so it was nothing for her to stay alone till her husband came back and joined her.

When he returned his wife wasn't there. He hollered and whistled and shot off his rifle, but heard nothing.

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Then he got frightened. He searched the country for days and days, till his provisions ran out. He had to come back to Eagle City then, but so much time had elapsed we didn't figger there was much chance of finding her alive. The queer thing about it all was that no trace of the vanished woman was ever found, not even when the government sent a special scoutin' party of old-time packers who knew that region better than anybody else in Alaska.

Poor Hewitt came back year after year, always in the hope of sometime finding a clue. But he never found one, not even her rifle or a torn bit of her clothing or anything. He explored every precipice where she might have fallen off. Some thought she might have been killed by a bear or moose. But if that had happened there certainly would have been some trace. It sure was queer. Some of the boys around Eagle City had a hunch the lady had been carried off by Indians. But somehow that didn't seem like a reasonable explanation of the mystery because the Indians around us were all friendly and had given very little trouble for a number of years. When the first white settlers came into the North Country the Indians carried off and killed quite a lot of them. Many prospectors pushed into the North and were never heard from again. One day one of these Arctic redskins came up to a white man over in the Big Salmon Country with a whole handful of watch fobs and lapel buttons. Mostly they was lodge emblems, and he wanted to sell them. That Indian must either of been awfully stupid or awfully thirsty for hooch. Well, the miner

bought some of them and then began making investigations. He uncovered the fact that a gang of prospectors had pushed into the interior six months before and had never been heard of again. Most of them belonged to some lodge or other.

Well, you can bet the miners got busy. They hog-tied that Indian and then forced a confession out of him while he gazed down the barrel of a rifle. After a while they got the truth out of him. He had been killing the miners for their supplies and money, and then had been sinking the boats in one of the deep parts of the river. Judges and juries didn't function much in that section. Five minutes after he had confessed that Indian was havin' his neck stretched.

Another time a little steamer with five men on board was taking supplies up one of the side rivers near where the Yukon bends and goes north of the Arctic Circle. An Indian hailed them from shore and the steamer pulled over to see what the trouble was. Other Indians came out of the underbrush and they murdered the white men on the spot and made off with their supplies.

After the boat had been weeks overdue a search was begun by the miners. They found the steamer moored to the river bank and a few miles away they came upon an Indian encampment, where they made inquiries.

"White man him tie up boat and go. Injun no savvy where him go," was all they could learn.

Then they began to put on the screws, at the point of their Winchesters. The Indians apparently saw the

jig was up and pushed out a poor old buck who was just about ready to cash in his checks from old age.

"This Injun, he killum," they said.

But the miners knew the old man was too wabbly and antiquated to any more than kill a mosquito, and they began cockin' their rifle hammers. The Indians saw visions of all being wiped out and they didn't lose no time at all pushin' out another one of their number, a young buck this time.

"This Injun, he killum, too," they said.

No two Indians of their species could bump off five husky white men, the miners figured. So they kept up the third degree until five redskins had been pushed out. Then they had a necktie party.

Another time a prospector was dressing a caribou that he'd just shot, and an Indian came up to watch him. As the prospector took out heart and liver the Indian gave a grunt.

"Caribou liver all same white man's liver," he said.

"How come you savvy that?" the prospector demanded.

But the Indian shut up. They put him through the third degree, too, but couldn't get anything out of him, although everybody felt sure he'd seen the insides of a white man.

But we never had any trouble with the "Siwash" Indians around Eagle City. They were such good-natured fellows that they were even friendly when they were drunk, which was as often as they could get hooch. There were stiff regulations against a soldier selling

an Indian whisky, and we didn't want to take any chances with it. Still, every time they bumped into a different soldier they would try to slip him some money.

"You catchem bottle whisky."

"Nothin' doin'," we'd reply, "catchem whisky for you and we get put in the hoosgow!"

We were right in the heart of Indian country. Squaws peddled beaded moccasins and woven baskets, and did most of the heavy work. The men hunted and loafed. Curious thing about 'em, too, was that many still used bows and arrows. Every so often when they ran out of ammunition they'd fall back on the bow and arrow for a mess of rabbits or grouse. But it was mostly the older Indians who did this.

For instance, there was a chief from a tribe over on Lake Mansfield, a burly fellow who was along about sixty, I guess.

"You shootem bow and arrow good?" I asked him one day.

"Shootem pretty good," said he, shrugging his shoulders. "Mebbe shootem better you shootem rifle."

Well, I'd just come in from rifle practice and was feeling cocky about getting so many bull's-eyes. Like all young fellows I secretly liked to show off, and I thought I'd just show that Indian what real shootin' was. So I got a little condensed milk can and set it up seventy-five feet away. Then I plugged a hole through the end of it with my .22 rifle. The old boy never blinked an eye. He just picked up his bow and arrow, took aim, and let drive. Not only did his arrow hit the can, but it actually

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hit my bullet hole and enlarged it. So it was the old redskin who was doin' the showing. Nor was it just accident, either. As regularly as I would put another hole in the can that old warrior would spread it a bit with an arrow. The drinks certainly were on me.

After that, sometimes when the old chief and his family were out of money and ammunition, I would take my rifle and forage for 'em. At a time like that it meant a lot for them to have a caribou or moose, and it was good sport for me.

I was out one time when I ran into a gang of Indians from another tribe having a caribou hunt. They had shot two cows, one of them heavy with calf. I came upon them when they were barbecuing the calf on a rawhide string over a camp fire, and they offered me a choice cut from this delicious Indian dish.

"Him too young," I told them, "white man no like."

They howled with laughter and thought that was a big joke.

"White man no savvy what good," they said and went on with their banquet.

The Indians certainly didn't waste anything they could possibly turn into food. They even barbecued the head of the caribou, and the intestines of wild ducks were just like ice cream and cake to them. You'd see 'em eatin' that particular dish around Ford's Lake, which was a famous place for ducks. That lake was twelve miles below Eagle, between the Yukon and the foothills, and whenever we wanted duck we would go

down there for a day or two. It was nothin' to kill three or four hundred on a trip.

I was out one time in the spring just when the lake began to thaw. I had been doin' a lot of shootin' and was goin' out on a strip of solid ice to gather up my ducks. I was wearin' hip boots, with thirty or forty rounds of cartridges in a haversack over one shoulder and a string of ducks over the other. The first I knew I was on soft ice, the whole thing gave way, and in I went. I grabbed for the edge of the ice, but it was slippery and honeycombed, and kept shaling off under my weight. The nearest land was twenty-five yards away across a stretch of open water. But there was nothin' to do but make for it. I swam thirty feet before I could touch the mud bottom and then waded in through the flags and bulrushes. I never knew water to be so cold. But I'd managed to hold on to my gun and wanted to finish my shooting trip. So I just took off my coat and wrung it out, and stood on my head to let the water run out of my boots, and then I went on shootin'. My cartridges were already swollen from the water that got into the bag, but I found I could still use them by chewing them and forcing 'em into the chamber one at a time. I like to froze before I decided I'd enough ducks to last for a while and started for camp to dry out.

If there was one thing that puzzled the Indians more'n anything else it was the military telegraph line between us up there on the Arctic Circle and the little seaport of Valdez across the high mountain ranges, hundreds of miles to the south of us. At Valdez it

hooked up with the cable to the U. S. A. Up till that telegraph line was put through the only way we could get mail and news from the outside world in winter was by dog team. Usually it took months for our mail to come through.

Well, that telegraph line may have been a good idea, but Uncle Sam sure picked out the worst time for building it. It was during that severe winter of 1905 when the seventy-below weather was freezin' the toes off half the garrison. The civilians who were hired to put the line through were old-time packers and burly sourdoughs who'd had no luck at diggin' gold. They fought blizzards and snowdrifts all the way. And the mule skinners who worked around Fort Egbert that winter invented more new combinations of cuss words than the most of us had heard in all the rest of our lives.

The Indians just couldn't savvy that telegraph line. They would gather from all over the North to watch the white men clearing the right of way, puttin' up poles and stringin' wires. They thought it was some kind of nutty game we were playin'.

"White man heap damn foolish," was their verdict.

Yea, and mebbe those redskins were right about it. That line sure did cost a stack of boodle to keep up. The stations were built every sixty miles or so, and these became loafing places for the Indians. When the different stations were connected up with the telegraph system, and the signal corps began operatin' the keys, them Indians were more baffled than ever. Then we put in telephones, and that knocked those dizzy natives for

a loop. The Indians simply couldn't savvy why the white man was talking to himself, into a box.

One day the boys got the chief of the Ketchumstock tribe on the wire at one station and old Chief Sam from Lake Mansfield at another. They showed 'em how to operate the telephone, then hooked 'em up. You should've heard the gibberish.

"Well, Chief Ketchumstock, what you think of it?" we asked.

"Me think string makem talk. Heap big funny business."

Down at Tanana Crossing there was a strip of about fifteen miles of open trail along the line where the linemen used to patrol up and down on bicycles during the short summer season. You should've seen the expressions on the faces of the Indians when they got their first look at our bicycles.

"White man him heap lazy; him sit down to walk," was all they said.

The only thing they thought proper for a man to ride on was a horse or a canoe. One of the chaps in my company was a big Swede named Carl Sundberg, who had been in the cavalry for years. He had switched to the infantry just so he could get more service overseas, where army time is always counted double. That is, if you serve in the Philippines or Guam or Hawaii or Alaska for one year, you get credit the same as if you had served two years at a fort anywhere in the United States. Well, the big Swede used to tell how Indians in the West had great respect for cavalrymen because they

rode on horses, but how they feared and hated the infantry, which they called "Walkemheap."

"Injun like him horse soldier," the old braves would say. "Injun he on warpath. Horse soldier he go boom, boom, boom, but no dead Injun. Cavalry fine. No can hit. But Walkemheap, him no good. Keep Injun on run all time. Injun he sit down, pretty soon walkemheap all round. Injun he go boom, boom. Walkemheap he go boom, boom, boom. Plenty dead Injun. No damn good Walkemheap. Him shoot too damn straight."

CHAPTER VII

MUSHING ARCTIC TRAILS

From Chicken Creek to Forty Mile—Squaw-man Jack and His Little Eva—Shorty Trailed Home Wearing Nothing but His Hat—We End Upside Down in the Big Tokio—In Jail with Mosquitoes for Prison Guards —My Toughest Break on Arctic Trails—A Mysterious Visitor from the Polar Sea.

DURING the first winter after the telegraph line was up only two signal corps men were assigned to a station, a lineman and a sergeant. The lineman would go out to patrol along the wire, and the sergeant would sit at the station and look wise. Well, they had that system until one of the linemen almost froze stiff. He had been chasin' trouble with the thermometer at sixty below, when he fell and broke his leg. Luckily that old boy happened to be a crack shot. He peppered at the wire until he shot it in two. Then he took an extra piece of wire that he was carryin' with him for patchin' purposes, and by crawlin' along on the snow he connected it up with the broken ends and tapped out this message:

"Send help. Leg broken. Twenty miles from station. Freezing."

He was nearly dead when the rescue gang got him.

After that they attached an extra infantry soldier to every station, and two men always went out together like New York detectives. My turn to serve on the line came in 1908. For a while I was down at Ketchumstock on the Mosquito Fork of the Forty Mile River, a hundred and fifty miles or so southeast of Fort Egbert. I also did a turn at Tanana Crossing.

Well, up there in the dead of winter it didn't get light until eleven in the morning and it was dark again by three in the afternoon. So we had a lot of time to kill, and with only three men to a station we were always mighty glad to have visitors blow in. Ketchumstock wasn't so bad because old Jack Laurence had the tradin' post there and Jack was always ready to spin yarns. His customers were Indians. In fact, Jack was a squaw man. He could get away with that sort of thing where we soldiers couldn't because they gave us orders to keep away from the young squaws. If we disobeyed it meant six months in the mill. I never saw a good-lookin' squaw, anyway, but there were plenty of sourdoughs who thought different.

Old Jack had been informally married—as I s'pose you'd call it—with this squaw for half a dozen years. She wasn't exactly the belle of the Frozen North either. She was middle-aged and fat and her name was Little Eva. She looked strong, and Jack had thought how nice it would be for her to take all the chores off his hands the way the Indian women did, snarin' rabbits, cleaning game, choppin' wood, and so on.

But foxy Little Eva was too smart for her Jack. She

had learned a few things about white man's customs. One day she came in from the snare line with a string of frozen rabbits and Jack told her to go rustle some wood. Eva didn't pay any attention, and Jack hollered at her again. Well, Little Eva lit into him with one of those big frozen Arctic hares, swingin' it with both hands. And she just about knocked her pale-face hubby for a goal. Jack got the wood.

Now Jack was a little man, not more than a hundred and thirty pounds, and Little Eva would make two of him. He couldn't very well fight her. So he just naturally decided the best thing to do would be to run away. Fine, but he didn't know his Eva. When he began to sell off his supplies without gettin' new ones she smelled a rat and wouldn't let him get out of her sight. Then Jack told her he was going down to Valdez to lay in a whole new stock of supplies. Eva said that was O. K. with her. Then she added, "Me go 'long, too."

I'd got my orders about that time to leave Ketchum-stock to go down to the telegraph station at Tanana Crossing for a change, so the three of us made the trip together. It was a two-day jaunt and I was glad to have company. Jack had his saddle horse and two pack horses. I was hoofin' it, and Eva tagged right along behind. All the way Jack was usin' what powers of persuasion he had in a vain attempt to convince her that he was only goin' to Valdez for supplies. He would talk himself black in the face and all his Little Eva would say was, "Yea, me go Valdez too."

Then Jack had a real inspiration. He began tellin'

Eva how nice it would be for her if she stopped off and visited her relatives in the Lake Mansfield tribe near Tanana Crossing, where he would pick her up on the way back. That did the trick. When we got to Lake Mansfield Eva let him go on to the coast alone. That's the last time I ever saw Jack Laurence, and I guess his bouncing Little Eva can say the same.

The Lake Mansfield Indians were just about to set out for Lake Tetlin, to visit another tribe and assist them stage their annual jamboree. The Indians of the Arctic call a blowout a potlatch, which means "to give." They save up sugar and flour and tea and blankets for the annual potlatch and then pass them out to their friends. I remember one potlatch that I attended. The Indians congregated in the biggest cabin in their village, all dolled up with feathers on their heads and bundled in red and purple blankets. Then they started getting cock-eyed on hooch. When the hard liquor gave out they took tea and brewed it until it was as black as your hat. When they drank it the whole lot of 'em acted like they were suffering from the D. T.'s. All the while the tom-toms were goin' like mad. The redskins danced just as long as they could keep on their feet. And when one keeled over the rest would pick him up and toss him in a corner and then go right on with the jamboree.

My visits to the potlatches always turned out happily, but there was an old sourdough in those parts who had rather a sad experience at an Indian blowout. Shorty Walsh was his name, and he had the store at Tanana Crossing before old Jack Martin bought him out.

Shorty considered himself quite the foxy trader. He took a pack of drygoods and beads and tobacco over to a potlatch, thinking that he might get unusual terms out of the Indians when they were lit up to the eyes with hooch.

Well, Shorty was showin' his goods to the Indians, who were feelin' pretty frisky from too much strong tea. The redskins were in a playful mood and began hidin' away Shorty's stuff without givin' him any pay. So Shorty began to talk rough and threaten 'em. Whereupon they just helped themselves to his pack and took every darn thing he had. Then they told him they would escort him home.

Well, there were a lot of little creeks and sluices in that section and the Indians had felled trees across them for bridges. Walkin' across requires a rather nice sense of balance. They took Shorty over every dizzy bridge of this sort that they could find, and what's more, they made him pay toll each time he came to one. They just about walked him all over Alaska lookin' for bridges to cross. After they got all his money they started in on his clothes. They may not have known the rules of strip poker, but their idea was the same. All they left poor Shorty was a black derby hat. When they had looted him of everything else they turned back to their village and left Shorty to manage the rest of the journey alone—protected only by his derby hat.

Luckily it was springtime, because Shorty had to make a whole day's march in that regalia. Then when he got home he didn't dare go in. The Valdez mail

carrier and his wife were livin' in Shorty's cabin with him, so he had to hide out under the willows near the house and yell like Hades for the mail carrier to bring out some clothes. Shorty tried to get even with the Indians but there was nothin' he could do. To start with, he had been out to bunco them, but luck broke against him and they beat him at his own game. What's more, he was joshed by everybody from then on because the mail carrier's wife couldn't keep his story secret. She let it leak and then it spread all over the interior of Alaska from Chicken Creek to Forty Mile. This got on his nerves so badly that he finally sold out and decamped.

We chaps at the fort always got along tiptop with the redskins. We frequently let 'em use our rowboat to go back and forth across the Tanana River. Well, one day they happened to have it when I wanted to cross myself. There was nothin' at the landing but one of their frail birchbark canoes. One of those canoes will tip over if you venture to wink one eye without winkin' the other at the same time. Nevertheless, I had always hankered for a spin in one. The Indians grow up with them and seldom have a spill, so I thought sure I could navigate one of the ticklish things.

They are light and swift, made of several sheets of bark lashed together with rawhide, and with the seams calked with moose tallow and spruce gum all mixed together. Then they sew in ribs and your canoe is ready for use. I had watched just how the Indians maneuvered these canoes, so I stepped into this one and struck off

without noticin' until I got out from shore that a stiff wind was blowin' up stream. The wide Tanana River was flecked with whitecaps. But I was a stout swimmer and decided to keep right on goin'. Well, when the Indians on the opposite shore saw me they sure put up a great din, yellin' and hollerin' for me to turn back. They seemed scared out of their wits. If I was drowned in their canoe they would be held responsible by the Great Spirit. I managed to get across, but it was a close squeak and I never tried shootin' any Arctic river in a birchbark canoe after that.

Slim Reynolds and I had been out repairin' the telegraph line along the Big Tokio. Being full of high spirits we decided on a bit of explorin'. We had no boat, so we built a raft with dead timber and spike nails. Then we fastened our packs on the raft by tyin' 'em to the ax and drivin' it deep into one of the logs. Off we went, down stream.

Wherever there was a curve in the river the current had undermined the bank, caving it in and throwin' the tops of trees far out into the water. Well, it was quite a job sneakin' our raft past those sweepers because when we tried to go around 'em we found the water so deep we couldn't touch bottom with our poles. But everything went O. K. until we had gone ten miles or so. Suddenly I saw a sweeper that had been down the river long enough for most of its limbs to be stripped off. Just a couple inches of tree showed above the water and we didn't notice it until almost on top of it.

"Pull to the left," I yelled.

Reynolds looked and saw our predicament, but in his excitement he pulled to the right. As a result we struck the sweeper a mighty swipe and then the current grabbed our raft, sucked it down under the tree and flopped it over.

"Grab your rifle and hang on!" I yelled as we went under.

We got a first rate ducking, but when the raft came back up we scrambled on top of it and I managed to seize one of our poles before it floated off. With it we pushed ashore. I always carried matches corked tight in a little bottle. So we had a fire in no time. Then while we were steaming out we devoured all our rations. Then we hopped on the raft again and cruised on down the Big Tokio to the next telegraph line shack.

Mosquitoes had been botherin' us all day on the river. But during the night they were heavily reënforced. We tried to get the best of them by using boughs for hoops and spreadin' our mosquito nets over these in the shape of a covered wagon. But hundreds of those ferocious pests somehow found their way through the netting and we thought we'd go mad. You hear a lot about Jersey mosquitoes, but take it from me two of 'em would hardly make a breakfast for a full-grown Alaska skeeter. Next day we put netting over our heads and tucked it down inside the collars of our shirts. We also wore gloves. But you need metal armor to keep those diabolical marauders from eating you alive. They have a bill

like a diamond drill. And when the wind blows your netting against your face they all are right there on the job and they shoot their stingers into you quicker'n a flash. Of course, they aren't everywhere, only along some of the rivers and in the swampy tundra country during the summer months.

In the early days the miners' vigilance committees used a mosquito tent for a summer jail. They'd take a prisoner's clothes away from him and push him in one of those tents. Just one look at the hordes of mosquitoes eying him hungrily from outside the net was enough to stop any prisoner from thinkin' about attempting to escape.

Even the bears of Alaska fear the mosquitoes. They dig a sort of bath deep in the mud in which they roll in order to get relief. And the moose submerge themselves in the lakes with nothing but their big Roman noses stickin' above the water. Believe me, everybody and everything in Alaska is glad when the mosquito season is over along about the end of July.

Patrolling the line in summer, except during the mosquito season, was a cinch. But in winter—ah! there-by hangs a tale.

The three of us on duty at each station along the line had some sixty miles of wire to look after. The line carried an extra heavy current so it didn't make any difference if a tree or branch fell in one or two places and robbed it of some juice. A place like that we called an escape. We could send messages right through six or eight of these escapes. But when there were more than

that out we would have to go, no matter what the weather.

The wire to the south went dead one morning in the middle of a blizzard when the thermometer stood at exactly sixty-two below. Our operator called up the chief signal officer to ask if we could wait with the repairs till the blizzard blew itself out a bit.

"No. This government wire must be kept open," came the answer.

"All right, come along, Reynolds," I said. "I have had my nose froze off in worse weather than this. So let's hop to it."

We buckled on our snowshoes, hitched up the dogs, and started out. We had eighteen inches of fresh snow to break through and it was slow goin'. I happened to be a bigger chap than Reynolds and I'd also had more snowshoe experience, so I broke trail. Well, we fought our way through that blizzard hour after hour, and still we didn't find a break in the line. The dogs' feet were being cut to ribbons from the blistered ice and my clothes were so stiff with frost that they cracked like brittle cardboard. About twenty-seven miles out Reynolds keeled over.

"I'm done for, Sam," he gasped. "Guess I can't make it."

Well, he just had to make it! We all had to make it, or freeze stiff out there on the trail. The only thing to do was to have him ride the sled. So I would go ahead and break the trail for a way, then come back and gee-up the dogs, with him layin' there helpless. I kept doin' that

all the rest of the way. I knew we couldn't be so far from a relief cabin down the line. But it began to look as though I might not hold out myself.

Breakin' trail got harder and harder. In some places the blizzard had blown the fresh snow off the old crust. I thought that would be easier goin', but not on your life. Suddenly the toe of one of my snowshoes caught on a soft place in the crust, and I took a peach of a header into the big bank of snow which we were crossing. I was takin' such long strides that when I lost my balance I plunged like a catapult. There I was hangin' head down in a thirty-foot drift with clumsy snowshoes preventin' me from gettin' righted. I could neither go deeper and attempt to tunnel out along the ground, or get back by the way I dived in.

I was half smotherin', with snow down my neck and up my sleeves. You couldn't do much swearin' half buried down there, but you certainly could think aplenty. Twisting myself around, I reached up and undid the thongs of my snowshoes, then got myself righted. I used the snowshoes to slap down the snow so as to make a solid shelf to climb up on. Then another step and finally out on top. Then I went back to Reynolds and the dogs and brought them around by another way because that snow was deep enough to bury us all.

Along toward late afternoon we found the relief cabin. We were so near frozen we could hardly make a fire to thaw ourselves. I don't think we could have held out another hour. That was the toughest snowshoe trek I ever had.

Well, we slept there for the night and next mornin' found the break in the line. Luckily for us, the storm was over. But we would have had to push on, anyhow. The break occurred where the snow had drifted over the wires and formed a thick crust. A herd of caribou had gone along on the crust lookin' for a sheltered place to browse and the whole herd had been walking right over that wire. No wonder it was snapped in two. We fixed it in jig time, although our hands nearly froze, and then we mushed back to the station.

But speaking about stiff trips in the Arctic reminds me that when I was up there on the edge of the Polar Circle I saw the finish of one of the greatest mushing trips of all time, and the story of it is a real epic of the Far North. It was back in the winter of 1906. A dog team pulled up outside our fort one biting cold day, and a blond, shaggy man with a huge hooked nose, all dresed in furs, came over to the sentry. His face was thin and haggard and his eyes bloodshot. He took his pipe out of his mouth and asked where the government telegraph station was—said he wanted to send a message.

Well, he went into the operator's igloo and wrote out what he wanted to send. The message was a long one and was addressed to "Haakon, Christiania, Norway." The operator spelled it out carefully.

"Is that enough address?" he asked the stranger. "It doesn't seem very definite."

"Yes, they think it's enough of an address in Norway," was all the visitor said.

That stranger was none other than Roald Amundsen and the message he sent was to none other than the King of Norway. More important still, it was a message that made history. It contained the first news from Amundsen since his departure from Norway two years before, when he had sailed forth in search of the long-sought Northwest Passage. For centuries explorers and geographers had hoped that someone would find that passage. Many expeditions had gone into the North in search of it and all had failed. But here Amundsen had actually found the Northwest Passage and made his way through it from end to end. He had come through all the way from Greenland to the mouth of the Mackenzie River and the Alaskan coast. At the moment his ship was still in the Arctic Ocean. Most of his men had fallen ill and Amundsen had set out alone with his dog team on a thousand-mile trip across the frozen wilderness to our fort at Eagle City, to get medicine for his companions. He spoke of that thousand-mile journey just as you or I would mention a stroll through a park.

Then our telegraph wire between the Arctic Circle and the outer world began to hum. The newspapers soon learned of Amundsen's report to his king. So messages flooded into our little station from all over the earth, askin' for more information. That telegraph station did more business in the next few days than in all the rest of its existence put together. But they all came in vain. Amundsen was again out of reach of the lines of communication of civilized men. He had sent

his message to King Haakon, bought medicine and tobacco and food, and set off again with his dogs on the return trek across a thousand miles of Arctic waste to his ship frozen in the ice near the mouth of the Mackenzie.

CHAPTER VIII

IN HANK RAYMOND'S SALOON

Whisky Straight, and Swapping Yarns with Klondike Pioneers—Black-jack, Poker, and the Sheeny Kid —When Cussin' Saved a Man's Life—Her Name Was Maud, and His Name Was Dynamite—A Hand-to-Hand Fight with the Most Dangerous Animal of the North.

We kept about forty sledge dogs up there at Uncle Sam's farthest north army post. And at every station along the "North Pole Telegraph Line" we had a team of malamutes and huskies. The airplane may speed up long-distance journeys in the Arctic but it will never supplant the dog in the way that the automobile has taken the place of the horse down here in the temperate zone. It's difficult to imagine what a white man would do without dogs through those long winter nights in the frozen lands. It's surprising what those Northern dogs can do. I have known them to make eighty miles in a day. If they have a level trail they can keep up a steady, faster pace than a man. Where the country isn't too rugged and hilly, the packers load 'em up a hundred pounds to a dog, and they seldom falter or complain.

Not only do they pull sleds, but they carry loads just like the donkey does in Mexico and in the Andes. The Indians of the North often use them for packing game, throwing the carcass across a dog's back, tied to a kind of pack saddle with one strap that goes under the dog's belly and another under his throat.

Although we had both malamutes and huskies, the best trail dog of the North is the Mackenzie River husky. He's a cross between the Indian dogs of the Arctic and the dogs brought in by the prospectors. They nearly all have a strain of wolf, too, and that strain seems to produce an animal with a better footing. The value of a dog in the Far North depends a lot on what kind of feet he has. You see, the foot of the domestic dog will wear out on a long trip over ice and snow. But the husky of the North has a tough, special sort of pad. You know how if you put your wet hand on dry ice in extreme cold weather, the skin will stick? Well, that's what happens to the feet of your dogs when they go from water to dry glacial ice. The dogs with tender feet are out of luck then. Most mushers carry little buckskin moccasins for the animals in their teams.

Our dogs are always given about the same rations as Uncle Sam fed to us soldiers. Plenty of dried salmon, with some boiled rice and bacon, was what we served 'em. A lot of them were fierce fellows, too, and we had to keep them chained so they wouldn't devour each other. In every bunch of huskies you'll find some killers. Not only will they pick a scrap with any dog team they happen to encounter on the trail, but I have known them

to turn upon their pals in their own teams and kill them.

One of the lieutenants at the fort had a prize bulldog. He was strolling along the edge of the parade ground with his bull one day when he had the bad luck to encounter a sourdough mushing in from the country on his way to Circle City. Being cocky, like most bulldogs are, the lieutenant's ambitious bull made a lunge at the sourdough's team. Yea, and it was the last lunge that bull ever made. Like a flash of lightnin', that whole team of huskies bounded for him, overturned their sled, and tore him to shreds. It was all over before the sourdough and the officer could even take a hand in the fray.

John Martin's "Buck" was a dog known all over the North for his wonderful strength, in my day. He was a cross between a mastiff and malamute.

Buck was an honest-to-gosh dog if there ever was one. One time he saved his master's life. It was this way. Jack Martin was homeward bound to his cabin with a load of supplies from the Outside. He had brung 'em up over the trail from Valdez. Well, a blizzard and terrific cold spell caught him. It went down to sixty-five below. Jack felt himself growin' numb. He had been in the Far North long enough to know what that meant. He knew he was freezin' to death. All feelin' had gone out of his hands and face. He thought maybe if he could get into the sled he might warm up. But if he did that, he knew they would just have to wait there, because there was one thing particular about Buck, he'd never pull a sled *if his master was on it.* So Martin always used to run along behind.

Anyhow, he threw the provisions out on the snow and got into the sled basket. Then he pulled the robes and the heavy canvas over himself. He thought mebbe there was a chance, and his only chance, that he could weather the storm there in the basket. If it lasted too long he knew he would freeze.

Well, Buck sat down on the trail and began to whine. He came back and nosed under the canvas and then whined some more. Martin was too cold to answer. And what did Buck do but strike right out up the trail, just as hard as he could go, with that sled. There was a steep bank just ahead, but it didn't stop him. He tugged the sled to the top, then lit out for the cabin.

When he got there Jack Martin was pretty far gone and didn't move. He was about ready to cash in. But Buck jumped on top of the sled and started barking and tuggin' at the robe. He kept that up and kept nosin' his master until Martin awoke enough to realize where he was. He was so near froze he couldn't walk, and his hands were so stiff he could hardly set the dog loose. Then he tucked the robe under his arm and crawled into the cabin on all fours. His fingers were so numb he couldn't strike a match to light a fire. He just covered Buck and himself with the wolf robe and the heat of that dog's body gradually brought him round. It was the best thing he could have done because he thawed out so gradual-like he didn't even lose a finger or a toe.

After a long trek it was just like gettin' back home again to roll into old Fort Egbert. Yeh, and the best place to find out what had been goin' on while you was

away was to go down to the saloon. It may not sound very classy, but in those days up there in Alaska the saloon was the social hall for everybody. The one at Eagle was a big room seventy-five feet long, and in the winter the gatherin' place was a red-hot sheet-iron stove right in the center. Spendin' a lot of time there didn't exactly mean you were drinkin' or even gamblin' —not for all the fellows, anyway. Of course, I must admit you'd never find Hightower in a saloon but what he wasn't thirsty, and old Fritz Koenig never saw the day when he couldn't always find room for just one more stein of beer.

Sometimes when the boys were sitting around playing black-jack or shooting craps or having a few drinks that made them howl with laughter and song, I used to regret a little that I somehow didn't fit in with all the hullabaloo and hilarity. Guess I wasn't cut out much for high jinks. I always preferred a quiet talk in a corner with a pal who could swap huntin' stories. Or I'd sit and watch while the other fellows had their fun, although that, as I said, sometimes made me a little sad and lonely. I'm afraid I'm not much of a mixer—a bit too shy, a bit too silent. My father was that way before me, and his father before him, dour frontiersmen who didn't believe much in wastin' words and not much cut out for jollity and jokes, and I guess I got my temperament from them instead of from the more jovial strain of my mother's side. I had a lot of mighty good friends, always have had, but I guess most of the boys thought me too tame, mebbe something of a dead one whose barroom manners

hadn't been properly cultivated. I knew they were wasting, burning the candle at both ends, but just the same I often envied them their roaring spirits. But the gift of gab and howling fun I didn't have. I felt most at home out on the trail with my rifle along and mebbe a buddy who had a flair for shootin' too, and the only sport I liked was followin' the trail or most any kind of shooting. I could get as much of a thrill out of making a string of bull's-eyes as Hightower when he drew to a straight flush and made it.

There wasn't any lack of gamblin', either. When we first landed up there in Alaska the place was wide open. You could take your choice at craps, poker, faro, roulette, black-jack, or at chuck-luck, a game the old-timers used to play with five dice. Bein' so soon after the first excitement of the big gold rush, the professional shysters were of course as thick as mosquitoes on a moose. And if you found one that wasn't crookeder than my mangled thumb, you knew he wasn't long for this world. You couldn't drop into Hank Raymond's saloon without runnin' into the Sheeny Kid. We never knew what his real name was, or where he'd come from. He'd sit there for hours with hardly a word, playin' stud poker or bankin' the crap games, and rakin' in the shekels. A prospector would come in with a whole season's gold pannings in a sack. And the Sheeny Kid would get the miner's whole stake before mornin'. If the Kid ever had any expression on his face, I never saw it—except his eyes—and he wore a gambler's visor, a green shade, over 'em when he was gamblin'. A thin face, a hawk

nose, and that visor over his black eyes. That was the Sheeny Kid.

If you were lookin' for an old sourdough who'd just mushed into town, the saloon was the place to find him. If he wasn't at Hank Raymond's, then you'd know for certain you could locate him down at Charley Gay's. The miners, and also the packers that worked for the government, would congregate there whenever they hit town.

"Name yer pizon, gents," the bartender would sing out as they crowded round.

Then after a jolt or two they would loosen up and start swappin' yarns. The more licker they put under their belts, the better the yarns would be. And you couldn't exactly begrudge those chaps a drinkin' bout once in a while. That life in the Far North was about as hard as you'll find it. The packers had to relay supplies to the telegraph station with pack mules in summer and with dogs in winter. Even in summer it was a stiff game. When they weren't swimmin' rivers and creeks they were coaxin' those balky mules through the quicksands and Arctic bogs, or stumblin' over niggerheads—the big bunches of tundra that grow up there. Havin' a mule mired right up to his belly is all in the day's work. The packers just wade in and cut the cinch ropes and drag the packs to solid ground. Then three or four men dig in and haul the mule out. It's places like that where the choicest and fanciest mule-skinnin', purple profanity is invented.

If it's as bad as all that in summer, just let your

imagination run riot and you'll have some slight idea of what it's like in winter when the drifts are twenty feet deep and it drops to fifty below. I wish you could've heard our chief packer, old Jim Cameron, hold forth on the winter climate of Alaska. Cameron was a pint-sized, brick-topped Mick from County Cork. He had soldiered for four hitches before resigning to become a contract teamster for Uncle Sam. He was one of the pioneers at Fort Egbert and later had been in charge of all the packers on the job of bringin' supplies when that North Pole telegraph line was strung across the Arctic from Valdez to the Yukon. One time he and his gang were caught in a particularly bitter spell of weather when they were tryin' to cross American Creek Summit. The crust on the snow had got soft and for ten rods or so their mules would break through and sink right out of sight. So those unlucky packers were obliged to shovel from mornin' till night.

One of them was a broad-shouldered Scandinavian named Muhm. The stiff work and the bitin' cold were too much for him. He just sat down in a drift and was all ready to konk out and have St. Peter punch his ticket.

"What'n hell you think you're doin', Muhm?" says Jim Cameron.

"Ay bane done for," Muhm groans.

"You sure are, you —— —— gig-headed Norwegian," says Cameron. "Get up or you'll freeze!"

"Ay don't give a damn," mumbled Muhm.

Well, that riled the Irish in Jim Cameron and he lit into poor Muhm, givin' him a kick into the snow and

cussin' him for being the worst blankety blank so-and-so he ever set eyes on. The names that Irishman called Muhm like to melted the snowdrifts. Men have been shot for a lot less up there in Alaska, and Muhm wasn't too far gone to realize it. Half froze like he was, he grunted and got up, got out his huntin' knife and made a rush for Cameron. But little Jim was as frisky as a cricket. He just dodged to one side and then the other and kept right on callin' Muhm a string of names that would've sounded blasphemous to Satan himself. And that Norwegian was frothin' at the mouth with rage. But Cameron just kept on cussin' him and playin' Ring Around Rosie. He knew if he could keep Muhm in motion like that for a bit his circulation would soon come back. And that's just what happened.

"Well, you big bum, are you warmed up yet?" he grinned, when Muhm came to a halt, blowin' like a walrus.

"Ay tank we bane damn fools," says Muhm, and they all went on with their shovelin'. That was one time when Irish wit and strong cussin' saved a man's life. They got busy with the mules again and managed to reach the relief cabin late that night.

Another old packer who was famous all along the Yukon in those days was Shorty Logan, the little French Canuck who had a cabin out on the North Fork of Forty Mile River. Shorty hardly stood five feet on his tiptoes, and he was well along in his fifties, the time o' life when many men in the North begin to crack up. But that didn't keep Shorty from bein' one of the best trap-

pers and hunters we had. In summer time he made a livin' by shootin' game and selling meat to the people in Eagle City. Of course, that happened to be against the law in the off season, but nobody ever took Shorty up on it. If he had just been shootin' for sport, that would've been a different matter.

And Shorty sure was a powerful shot. He was the only man I ever did see who could shoot a rifle without a rear sight on it. That is, without the notch at the breech. He once took a dirty spill on a rock slide in the mountains and when he picked himself up a bit farther down the slope he found the rear sight had busted off his gun. So Shorty just went on shootin' without it. We used to josh him a lot about it in Eagle City.

"Hi there, Runt, busted any more sights off that toy popgun of yourn?" somebody would sing out.

Shorty's squinty little eyes would squint up more'n ever and he would scratch his stubble of whiskers.

"Ay tink you make the fun," he would say. "That gun, I shoot heem damn good."

So Shorty kept his old gun, and went right on shootin' just as good with it as most of us could with real sights. But a trader in Eagle City who had prospected with Shorty in the old Klondike days took pity on him and made him a present of a modern high-powered Ross sporting rifle. Then Shorty just went out with it and shot all the game in sight. I met him comin' into Eagle City with his mule Maud so loaded down with quarters of fresh meat that all you could see was her ears.

That mule Maud was almost as much of a character

up there in the Land of the Midnight Sun as Shorty was. Like an Arab mare in a sheik's tent, Maud lived right in the same cabin with Shorty, and ate her meals same time he did. The only difference was when Shorty ate flapjacks Maud ate willow boughs, and where Shorty took his caribou steak cooked, Maud took hers raw. I have never heard of a horse eatin' flesh. For that matter, most of 'em won't even drink water out of a greasy pail. But there are lots of mules that eat meat and grease. My education ain't much to brag about. I hardly know the difference between sociology and phrenology. But when it comes to muleology, I suppose you might consider me a sort of professor. Whenever we used to bring game down out of the hills, we used to cover it up careful with canvas or our mules would chew the meat on each other's back.

Our prize meat-eatin' mule was a pack animal we called Dynamite. That mule was plumb nuts about bacon and would steal it every chance he got. He'd make a good character for a colored comic strip. I recall once when Dynamite grabbed a whole slab of bacon out of our mess kitchen window and ran off with it.

That Dynamite was the orneriest mule that ever toted a pack along the Arctic Circle, but we kept him because he could carry such big loads. Half the time he'd have almost as much on his back as he weighed himself. The trouble was in gettin' Dynamite started. I watched Cameron loadin' him up one day. He put blinkers on Dynamite while he was doing it and used

a double cinch. Then he yanked off the blinkers and jumped back.

"Now kick, you son-of-a-gun," he says.

And Dynamite kicked. He r'ared and pitched and bucked and fence-rowed for ten minutes without a stop. He tried every mulish trick he could to get that blasted pack off. When he found he couldn't, he calmed down and took his place with the other pack mules. That was a regular performance with Dynamite. We always had a daily rodeo when we took him out.

One time while takin' the mail and supplies out to the telegraph stations a stop was made on Forty Mile River to pitch camp. Dynamite, as usual, was nosin' round the packs tryin' to smell out some bacon. I don't just know whether the mail bag gave off the aroma of bacon or whether Dynamite was more devilish than ordinary that day. Anyhow, the first thing the packers knew, that mischief-lovin' mule was runnin' off with the mail sack in his mouth.

The whole gang took after him, and Dynamite seemed to enjoy the chase. He would put down the sack until they were up to a few rods of him, then he would snatch it up and gallop off again. They chased that mule pretty near all over that corner of Alaska, and finally got him hemmed in on a little point which stuck out into Forty Mile River, but Dynamite wasn't cornered yet. He made straight for the water.

"Get a rifle," Cameron hollers. "Get a rifle."

He was ready to shoot the mule to save the mail, but

Dynamite was too quick. He dived into the river, swam out to the middle, and let loose of the mail bag.

Well, if that was a smart mule, so was Jim Cameron a smart Irishman. He sprinted along the bank two or three hundred yards to where the river made a sharp turn. There was just a chance that he could wade out and get the bag as it drifted by. He had the right idea.

"Glory be to God, I got it," he says. Then he looks around for the mule, and there is Dynamite browsin' off the willows like the rest of the pack train, innocent as a lamb. And that was another time when some fancy mule-skinnin' language was invented.

Somehow or other a mule isn't ever credited with much intelligence, and I guess they don't match up with a horse in some respects. But you have to admit they're shrewd. I found out from my long dealin' with them that you can't let on to one that you have any fear of him. If he is the kickin' kind you have to stalk into his stall like you thought he was a spring lamb and ten to one he'll act like he was. You just saunter in whistlin' a tune, and you keep on whistlin', and Mr. Mule won't do anything but wiggle his ears back and forth.

"Do I kick, or don't I?" he's wondering. If you show any fear his answer will be in the affirmative. And when a mule kicks, look out, mister, look out.

When they made their long trips the packers and the rest of us used to buy hay for our mules from an old frontiersman named Frank Lee, down on the Mosquito Fork of the Forty Mile. Lee was the only man thereabouts who owned a mowing machine. He had actually

brought it in from the coast by muleback, but how he managed it nobody could figger out. There was lots of native hay back in there and Lee was smart enough to cash in on it.

Lee wasn't an old frontiersman for nothing. No matter what happened, nothin' ever stumped that chap. Once he was ridin' one of his horses down to Chicken Creek when he ran square into a herd of caribou. Now caribou won't run from a man on horseback like they will if he is walkin'. Lee rode right up to the herd and killed fourteen of them with his rifle before they scattered. When he started dressin' the caribou he found he had come away without his huntin' knife. He knew if he let the animals lie without dressing while he rode back to his cabin to get the knife, the meat would begin to spoil. So he tried shootin' holes through the skin and then tearin' it, but that didn't work. He wouldn't give up. He took an empty cartridge, about the size of your finger, flattened it out with a stone, and rubbed it on the rock to put an edge on it. With that little scrap of brass he cut open those fourteen caribou and saved the meat. He took it into Chicken Creek and cleaned up a good little sum from it.

Lee was tellin' us that story at Hank Raymond's one night when Jim Cameron spoke up:

"Well, I never got fourteen caribou at a crack, but begorry I did have a bit of luck on my last trip out."

Then Jim told us how he had been lookin' for game when he heard a growling and roarin' down the mountain side. He crept down and sighted a big brown bear.

He pulled the trigger and got a bull's-eye, but one bullet wasn't enough. The bear hoisted up on his hind feet and then disappeared in the brush. Then Cameron saw a two-year-old moose on the ground where the bear had been. The bear had just caught it and broke its neck. Cameron dressed the moose on the spot and the packers, thanks to Mr. Bear, had fresh meat.

"That'sa nothin', I getta the moose easy, too," sang out another voice. It was Dago Jim, an old Sicilian sourdough prospector, who usually loafed round the saloon. We never knew what his real name was, but that was common in Alaska. There were rumors to the effect that he had lit out from Italy to escape the revenge of the Mafia. Mebbe he figgered the best place to go to keep from havin' a stiletto stuck between his fourth and fifth ribs was where there were no other Italians. You might talk to a man every day for a year up in that country and still not know any name for him except "Dirty Pete" or "Hump-backed Jake."

"Jim, you no mada da mon prospectin'," Hightower would joshingly say to him. "You better go backa to Italy and buya da monk and grinda da organ."

Dago Jim had been coming into Eagle City for a new stock of provisions and was only a mile outside town when a young moose jumped down off a hillside in front of him and landed into a quicksand swamp. The moose couldn't get out, and Dago Jim killed it right there with his huntin' knife. He and some packers brought in the meat and he sold it for enough to buy his next big supply of provisions.

Jahnnie Palermo, the gun-shy hero.

In the days when my Alaskan sharpshooting stood me in good stead.

Then I knew another prospector who found a yearling moose that had been killed in the forest, but not quite recent enough for him to eat it. However, he went back to his cabin and got his partner and the two of them set out with their dog sled to bring it back for dog food. They sledded as far as they could go and then started climbin' up to the rock where the moose had been. As the man in front came up over the edge of the rock he saw what he thought was a small bear standing over the carcass. It gave a bound to the other side of the rock where the second prospector was climbing up. But it wasn't a bear. It was a wolverine.

That second chap looked up just in time to see the wolverine bounding through the air right toward his face. It just so happened that he was grasping a birch shrub with his left hand and holdin' the handle of his hand ax with his right. He brought the ax down between the animal's eyes and killed it with one blow. That sure was a close call, because the wolverine is a powerful beast.

The old-timers say the wolverine is stronger than any other wild animal its size in all the North Country. Yes, and I'll vouch for the fact that it's the meanest animal of 'em all. The wolverine will follow a trapper's line for miles, destroying the fur of the animals in the traps even if it doesn't want to eat any of the meat. It's so cunning and strong you can't catch it in a trap. About the only way to destroy him is by poison. He looks very much like a yearlin' bear cub, except that he has yel-

lowish-gray streaks along his back. Wolverines and wolves are bad actors.

I have heard some say that wolves won't really attack you and that they merely follow man out of curiosity. Mebbe, but one winter a mail carrier was mushin' his dog team over the trail from Valdez to Chicken Creek. It was gettin' dark when he heard a sound that was enough to curdle his blood. It was the weird howling of wolves close behind him. When he reached for his rifle to have it handy it wasn't there. It had slipped off the pack sled into the snow.

The mail carrier whipped up his dogs, hoping to leave the wolves behind. But the howlin' kept up. The wolves followed him for miles, and after a while they began to close in on him. It was forty below and he reckoned he had a choice between providin' dinner for that pack of wolves or freezin' to death up a tree. So he took to a tree, and then the wolves rushed in.

It was nothin' but pure luck that happened to send another sourdough along that trail about an hour later. It isn't once in a hundred times that you meet anybody else on the trail in the winter. But this just goes to show how Providence looks after some people, sometimes.

The mail carrier heard the other man comin'. He tried to holler but he was so near froze that all he could manage was a few squeaks. It was luck again that the second man saw the dog team and sled in the dark. He couldn't see the wolves because they had backed off into the brush when they heard him comin'. When he

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saw the dog team he began lookin' for the driver and saw the mail carrier.

"Wolves," the mail carrier gasped. "A whole pack! In the brush."

The second chap wheeled, saw their shining eyes in the dark, jerked his rifle to his shoulder and let drive. The pack vanished into the brush.

"Come on down, they're gone," he hollered up.

But the mail carrier was so stiff he couldn't move. So the sourdough had to climb up and tie a rope around him and then let him down gradually over a limb. He loaded him on the sled and took him to a trapper's cabin between Ketchumstock and Lake Mansfield, where they thawed him out.

As that feller, Robert Service, said:

> There are strange things done
> 'Neath the midnight sun
> By the men who moil for gold.

And one of the strangest I know of was the time Chick Meisener shot the tail off a wolf. He was another old-timer, a prospector who dug for pay dirt part of the time and worked on the government pack-mule train in winter. Well, one moonlight night Chick Meisener was sittin' cleanin' his Winchester when his dog barked. He thought probably it was some prospector mushin' up creek and went to the door to hail him. You're always glad to have company out there in the wilds. But instead of a man it was a wolf scampering back and forth down by the creek, tryin' to attract the attention of the dogs.

You know, those wolves are cunning beasts and one of their tricks is to coax a dog away from a cabin so the whole pack can pounce on him and eat him up. Quick as a flash, Meisener threw in the bolt of his gun, pulled up and fired. The wolf vanished. Next morning the prospector found its tail. He'd shot it right clean off. I'll bet Mr. Wolf was careful whose cabin he serenaded after that.

CHAPTER IX

ON THE TRAIL OF BEAR

Tom Kessie Barges in on a Bear's Banquet—The Adventure of the Two Trappers from the Koyukuk—Shorty John Fights It out Barehanded—A Stud Poker Game with an Insane Prospector.

ABOUT the first place where gold was found in Alaska was down at Forty Mile in the country where I spent much of my time soldiering for Uncle Sam. Prospectors ran onto pay dirt there as far back as 1887, and the Forty-Milers were to Alaskan gold minin' what the Forty-Niners were to California.

Some may like to sit around in your big city hotels drinkin' tea and playing bridge, and some may like to go to the movies and indulge in other forms of civilized entertainment. But as for me, I got more kick out of sittin' around the saloons up there during the long Arctic night listening to the old-timers and their tales. Of course, you know about Swift-Water Bill. His last name was Gates and he got his nickname because he claimed to have shot the famous rapids of the Upper Yukon at Whitehorse and Miles Canyon, although his pals said he hadn't. Anyhow, Swift-Water Bill cleaned up a big fortune in the early Klondike days, blew it in

and cleaned up another fortune or two. Then there was Charley Anderson, the lucky Swede, who got blind drunk in a saloon down at Forty Mile and before he come to had paid all his money to a crook for a claim fifty miles from nowhere. But he was a stubborn Swede and went to see where the property was, and in the first pan of dirt that he washed on that presumably worthless claim he panned out fourteen hundred dollars' worth of nuggets. That claim turned out to be the famous El Dorado you've all heard about, and it coughed up two million dollars in nuggets and dust for that lanky Swede. But most of the prospectors I knew were the old-timers who had never had the luck to find pay dirt except in small quantities. Just the same, the spell of the North had got 'em and they stayed on. Most of them could turn a hand to anything from packin', trappin', and wood choppin', to keepin' store or tendin' bar.

Eagle City had been quite a hustlin' minin' camp in the days gone by. Before the White Pass Railroad was built all the supplies were brought in over the mountains by trail and there were times when salt sold for a dollar a pound and a sack of oatmeal set you back a hundred bucks. One day a prospector mushed into Eagle City from his diggin's and breezed into a store.

"Gimme ten cents' worth of insect powder, pard," he says.

"Ten cents' worth!" says the man behind the counter. "Hell, man, I can't afford to wrap it up for ten cents."

"Waal, you don't need to wrap her up," the sour-

dough drawls, "Just dump 'er down the back of my neck."

Another sourdough came in to buy a pound of sulphur.

"Five dollars is the price," the storekeeper said as he handed it over.

"Five dollars!" the miner exclaimed. "Man alive, I only paid two bits for it in Skagway."

"Yes, and you can get it in hell for nothin'," was all the answer he got for that.

This storekeeper got so he was doin' a good business with the Indians. It all started by his false teeth accidentally droppin' out of his mouth one day while he was sellin' a huntin' knife to a chief. The Indian had never seen false teeth before and couldn't believe his eyes. He spread the news and his whole tribe came to see the white man who could take out his teeth. But that trader had an eye for business. He wasn't puttin' on free exhibitions.

"Indians buyem something; I takem out teeth," he told them. So the Indians had to pay for each performance and the trader did a rousing business until another prospector came in with false teeth and busted up the show by free competition.

Yes, and while on the subject of entertainment, there was the first phonograph that ever arrived up that way. It was owned by Tom Kessie, an old Western cowpuncher who came to Alaska to prospect away back before the big gold rush. He finally found a claim that paid first rate, so he decided to splurge a bit. Tom sent out to Sears Roebuck for a phonograph. When

the Indians heard the thing they crowded round his cabin thicker'n they had to see the false teeth performance.

"Well, what do you think of it?" old Tom would chuckle.

"Indian, he no savvy. He think canned white man."

Tom was a good-natured old fellow and would play every one of his twelve records for them, but they never got enough. They sure liked that canned music and got so they could dance to it. Another reason Tom always got along so good with the Indians was that when they were out of ammunition and money he would go along and shoot game just to help them out. Tom was one of the first sourdoughs to own a .44 Winchester carbine when that gun first came out. He was very proud of it and thought he could kill an elephant with it. One day he was ridin' along on his horse when he discovered a bear having a banquet in a hazelnut thicket. Tom let drive with his .44 Winchester. He hit the bear but didn't kill it. Mr. Bear gave one roar and came for Tom full speed. The horse didn't wait to be told what to do. It went snortin' down the trail on the dead run. But the bear was makin' pretty good speed itself. It was leapin' at the horse's hams with all fours off the ground. As for Tom, he was tryin' to hold on the saddle with one hand and shoot with the other. He emptied that carbine and then all the ammunition out of his six-shooter before he got the bear.

The best part about most Alaskan bear yarns is that they are generally true. The man who tells it often

carries the proof somewhere on his body. For instance, there were two trappers from back in the Koyukuk River country who dropped into Eagle City for a new supply of rations one day. Their hands were covered with bandages, and we asked them what had happened. What they told us was aplenty.

These men were comin' in from their trap line when they ran plumb into a herd of caribou. They fired all their ammunition away except one round each, and it so happened they were carryin' different caliber rifles. They dressed the caribou and cached them until they could come back with pack mules, and then kept on to their camp.

A half mile farther on, right outside their camp, they discovered a big brown bear down the hill below them. That bear was just playin'. He had a big rock in his paws and was jugglin' it from side to side. Lots of the frontiersmen told about seein' bears do that. Whether they are amusin' themselves or doin' their daily dozen, nobody knows.

"Watch me get him," says one of the trappers.

The other fellow was more cautious. "Better wait till you have more ammunition," he said. "He'll be around here all fall."

But the first trapper had killed many a bear with one shot before that by breakin' its neck.

The trapper who had fired dropped his rifle and grabbed his big huntin' knife. His partner took aim and waited. The bear was almost close enough to smell the muzzle of the rifle when he fired. His bullet landed in

the bear's neck, but it missed the bone, too, and the animal grappled the man with the knife. They went down in a rollin', tumblin' struggle, the bear using his great paws to crush the man, and the man driving his long knife into the bear's belly with big rippin' gashes.

With his last bullet gone, the partner pulled out his huntin' knife and attacked the bear from the back, aimin' for the spine. Roarin' with rage, the animal let go the first man and whirled on the second one. He got him in such a position he would have crushed him in a few minutes, but it gave the first man a chance to get in a good strike with his knife. He drove it in up to the hilt, and the bear toppled over dead.

The two trappers were miles from another cabin and farther yet from a doc. Both of them had been crushed almost unconscious, and each had his left hand chewed up like mincemeat. So they had used one hand apiece and splinted each other up, and even skinned and dressed the bear. All you had to do was take one look at their hands, and you didn't have any doubts about that particular bear story.

There was another old-timer who had a closer shave than that. He was Shorty John, a prospector who was famous all over the gold country for the tremendous strength he had in his arms and hands. It wasn't that he was so big. He wasn't much taller than Shorty Logan, but he had arms and shoulders like a gorilla. He had enough strength in one arm to match any two ordinary men. And that uncommon strength is what saved his life once.

Alaskan brown bear all set for a charge. Woodfill of the Regulars had many narrow escapes in encounters with these and other monarchs of the North.

"Shirt-sleeve" weather on the edge of the Arctic. Ready for a 50-mile mush down the trail to Chicken Creek. Sam and his fellow sourdoughs looked upon it as almost sub-tropical when the thermometer stood at 20 below. But often a blizzard overtook them on the trail and there were wild tales to tell of adventures at 70 below.

He was goin' along the trail down near Fairbanks with all his belongin's loaded on a pack on his back—blankets, rations, cookin' pans, and gold minin' tools. It weighed one hundred and fifty pounds, but he never seemed to know it was there. He was walkin' along whistlin' to himself when he ran smack into a bear and her two cubs. The bear took one look at him and cuffed the cubs end over end. In bear language that means "Danger near! Beat it!" The cubs didn't need a second tellin'. They made for the nearest spruce tree, and the mother attacked.

She landed on the prospector like a ton of bricks. She knocked him sprawlin', but he didn't lose his wits. As she came at him again he grabbed her by the snout, with his thumb in back of her tusks.

There never was such a fight between man and bear in the memory of the old-timers. Shorty's revolver was in his pack. It was a man's strength against an animal's tooth and claw. The bear's big claws were ripping up the heavy pack like it was so much tissue paper. Fryin' pans and gold picks were flyin' right and left, and the blankets were torn into ribbons. But Shorty never let go the bear's snout, and managed to keep her teeth away from his face. She tore every shred of that pack off his back and then started clawin' at his bare flesh.

The man and the bear rolled over and over, but Shorty never let go his hold. As he happened to throw out his other arm he felt a rock right under his fingers. He picked it up and started batterin' at the bear's head. He was bleedin' from head to foot and in terrible pain,

but he kept on batterin'. The bear had clawed all the flesh from his arms and legs and laid his ribs bare before he pounded her unconscious. Then she slumped down in a heap and Shorty crawled over to where his revolver had been knocked out on the ground. He fired one shot into her head and then he collapsed.

Another prospector came along the same trail and stumbled on the dead bear and what looked like a dead man. But Shorty wasn't dead. The other prospector took off his shirt and tore it into strips to tie up the worst wounds. He had never seen a human bein' look more like sausage meat. He didn't think for a minute that Shorty could live, but the old fellow pulled through. He never was the strong man he was before, but his wounds healed up and he went back to his prospectin'.

There was John Ott, an old sourdough who had come over Chilkoot Pass in the days of '98. John had a placer claim and a cabin down on Mission Creek, thirty miles or so from our fort. Although he never seemed to make a rich haul he always had plenty of dust. Old John was a particular friend of mine, and once when I turned in at his cabin to put up for the night I found him hammering away at some repairs on the roof.

"What's the matter, John? Lightnin' strike you?"

"No, py Gott," he says, "these damt bears, they got my bacon."

Maybe you don't know how those Alaskan cabins are built. Well, they put on a covering of split logs for a roof, with about a foot of earth over that, and on top still another foot of moss. That makes your cabin warm

and also rainproof. Well, a passing bear had smelled John's bacon inside the cabin and started to sniff round. He climbed up on the roof and dug through that moss and dirt and then even pulled out enough of the split logs so he could drop into the cabin. Then that bear just turned old John's place upside down. After he ate all the bacon he started in to satisfy his bearlike curiosity. He had a regular Hallowe'en celebration. He turned over the stove, knocked frying pans and kettles off the shelves, and tore the beddin' off the bunk and dragged it around the floor. Then he crawled back out through the roof, but how he did it I never could see.

Anyhow, that's the way John found the cabin when he came home. And he knew bears. And he knew this particular bear would come right back for more bacon. So every night he laid for it, with his Winchester right in reach, and he got the prowler three nights later. I guess the thing that made John the maddest was the way that bear tore up his cabin. A tidy sourdough's cabin was rare in Alaska. But John Ott was an ideal housekeeper. He was German, you see, and keepin' his cabin orderly was more important to him than finding a second El Dorado. He was always glad to have us soldiers from the fort blow in on him; that is, as long as we didn't get rowdy and mess up the premises.

"You poys shust come und stay so long as you vish," he would tell us, "vedder I am here or vedder I am avay. But you must alvays clean up ven you leaf."

I always liked to stop with old John. He had been educated in some German university before he came to

America and he was about the only sourdough I ever saw who brought a box of books into the wilds with him.

"What's this book about, John?" I said once, picking up a big volume printed in German.

"Dot's a pook on vhat you English call socialism, my poy."

I didn't know anything about that and told him so.

"Neffer mind, my poy," reassured old John, "you feel much happier ven you don't."

John was a good cook as well as a scholar. If there were any better flapjacks in Alaska than his, we never ran into them. That was another reason why he was so popular with the soldiers. There was one fellow in particular in my company who always managed to travel past John Ott's cabin, no matter where he was bound for, and he usually managed it so he could stay overnight. He was a pint-sized private named Lester Otey, and his two principal accomplishments were plunking on a guitar and stowing away flapjacks.

One night when I was late gettin' back to the fort I decided to bunk with John and push on to Eagle next morning. Well, John already was swamped with company. A bunch of soldiers had started out on a hunting trip and had dropped in on him. They liked it so much they decided to call off the huntin' part of their expedition.

It was a jolly crowd, too. You see, Hightower was there. He and three other guys were sittin' round John's table having a game of stud poker. Over beside the stove was skinnny little Otey tryin' to entertain John

with "The Watch on the Rhine" on the guitar. John was playing the perfect host by fryin' flapjacks, and also keepin' time with his pancake turner. He had a stack of flapjacks that looked as though it would soon touch the ceiling, enough for a regiment. You see, John was in a genial mood, too. Well, we all lit into that stack as though we hadn't seen food for a week and we got more than our fill—except Otey. He was still hungry when the stack gave out.

"Ach du lieber," says old John, "to-morrow I fix you right."

He is up next morning an hour ahead of the rest of us. He makes the biggest panful of flapjack batter and he frys three big stacks of them. Then he calls the gang, and he keeps count on Otey as he filed away the flapjacks amidships.

That old Dutchman never got tired of telling about it. "Py Gott," he said, "I neffer see anypody could beat that damt skinny Otey for eatin' the pancakes. I fry for him thirty-two as big as the pan vill holt before he iss full. But for vunce I bake him enuff."

Generally our soldier crowd at the fort got along famously with the sourdoughs. The only trouble I can recall was caused by too much hooch. And of course, Hightower was usually mixed up in it. He and Sergeant Howard and another soldier were on their way over the trail between the North Fork telegraph station and the Ketchumstock station. They stopped at a sourdough's cabin to warm up, and got too warm, that is two of

them did. Howard didn't happen to be drinking that day.

The next thing was that they were all having one hell of a rumpus, and the sourdough chased 'em out. The three boys tried to square themselves with him, but the old chap wouldn't listen. He went back inside his cabin for his Winchester and when they were about a hundred yards down the trail with their dog team, he opened up. They mushed along at top speed to get around a bend in the North Fork and out of range. But Howard was out of luck. He was the only one who was sober and the only one who got hit. You know the old saying about the Lord protectin' drunks and fools. Well, a bullet smashed into his thigh and he spun around and fell head first into the snow.

The other two pulled up on their rifles but the sourdough had disappeared in his cabin. They were sober enough now to know that the most important thing was to get Howard to the hospital. So they didn't waste any more time, but traveled day and night until they covered the sixty miles to Fort Egbert. It was too late to save Howard's leg. His thigh bone was shattered so bad that the Post doctor had to amputate it. Then the U. S. marshal sent out a party to bring in the prospector. He turned out to be insane, so they sent him to the States and locked him up where he couldn't get gay with a rifle again.

CHAPTER X

I TRAIN FOR WAR ON THE LAST FRONTIER

Big Game on the Telegraph Line—The Blizzard on the Devil's Backbone—A Whole Mountain Covered with Caribou—Knocking 'Em Over at Two Thousand Yards —A Finish Fight Between Two Bull Caribou.

If you want thrills, go North. Spend a year in Alaska, and no matter to what remote parts of the world your wanderings take you there will always be a longing to go back. I suppose this is because it is a land of the unusual. You'd get a thrill out of almost everything in Alaska: its towering mountain ranges, with peaks that are nameless, huge glaciers cracking off into fiords and rivers with the roar of thunder; vast silent rivers where you can go for hundreds of miles without seein' a sign of human life; the salmon runs with millions upon millions of fish tumbling over each other; crackling Northern lights that go racing across the sky; vegetables and fruits that grow to twice their normal size; interesting characters who dig for gold; the tens of thousands of caribou that migrate across the Frozen Lands; the Eskimos, and the volcanoes. But the biggest thrill to me was the thrill that came with hunting big game. To make

much of a success at it there is one thing you got to be, and one thing you got to be without. You got to be sure on the trigger. And you got to be without nerves.

Well, my first few years in Alaska had done a lot to help me out in these respects. The vigorous climate and hard, rough work on the trails had made up for the damage done to me by soaking my system full of coffee when I was a stoop-shouldered youngster on the farm. It had wiped out all the bad effects of the fever that had laid me low in the Philippines. It had put another thirty pounds of beef on my frame and had pushed me up another three inches in height. All the time I had kept up my target practice until finding the mark with my bullet was just as much second nature to me as finding my mouth with my fork. I don't say that in a boastin' way. It just sort o' came natural to me. Different people are good for different things, and my inclinations and abilities just naturally seemed to run to shootin'. We had plenty of chance to get acquainted with big game while patrolling the telegraph line. Then one summer when I was delegated to live down the river and catch fish for the fort I spent all my spare time roamin' around in the hills with my rifle. That fishin' camp was about a mile below the fort, where Mission Creek empties into the Yukon. I lived in a tent all alone down there and caught salmon for the Fort Egbert mess and for winter grub for the dog teams. Our company mechanic made a big fish wheel with two paddles and two deep nets of heavy chicken wire. The wheel was swung between two log rafts out in the river so that when

it was turned around by the current it would scoop up the fish from the stream in the nets and send 'em through a chute into two boxes that were about the size of wagon beds. The fish just naturally caught themselves, and to show you how easy it was, sometimes when I went down to have a look in the morning I would find a ton of fish in each box.

The summers up there on the edge of the Arctic are so short that the Yukon, even in July, is just like liquid ice. But I had a swim in it every morning, and after that icy dip I could eat enough salmon steak and fried potatoes for six men. Then I'd clean the fish and take them back to the fort in my rowboat. After that I'd hunt in the hills for a few days until the company mess needed another supply of salmon.

It was a great life at that fish camp. Lonely? I suppose some people would think so, but there was always some fellow droppin' in on me. Then, too, during the summer season a detachment from the fort would always be stationed at a military huntin' camp back in the interior. Five or ten men would go out for a week or so at a time. They would bring the game to the fort by pack train, and then another detachment would go out and take their place in the hills. All the soldiers were anxious to try huntin' once, but after a little while the novelty seemed to wear off for most of 'em, and the huntin' simmered down to a half dozen of us who really were keen about it. I was one of that crew and for months at a time I did almost nothin' but hunt. They detailed me to the huntin' camp as a sort of permanent

fixture, to break in all the new fellows who came up for a shoot, and to show 'em the country.

About the most important thing was to be able to take care of yourself in any kind of weather. I got so tough and hard-bitten that blizzards and sixty-degree weather never worried me much. It was hard, rough work, but there was a kick to it that I can't put into words. It's a man's life and a man's country and it sure put the spell on me.

Although I hunted bear a lot it was caribou and moose that we counted on for our chief food supply. We used to go after caribou as soon as they started running, along in October. There were three months of open shootin' on caribou, with no bag limit for a soldier huntin' for a company mess. I suppose the basin of the Mosquito Fork of the Forty Mile River is the finest caribou country in the world. You find them migrating across that section both in the fall and in the spring. In the spring they break up into small bands, while in the fall they gather together until it isn't uncommon to see thousands in a herd. They band that way to protect themselves during the winter months against the packs of wolves that range over the Frozen Lands.

Most of the dead caribou I ever came upon that I knew had been killed by wolves had been cut down on the ice, usually where the creeks overflowed and then froze. The caribou would slip on this, while the wolf's padded foot would enable him to move on the ice like a man wearing a rubber-soled shoe. When the wolves caught a herd on a stretch of ice it meant good-bye cari-

bou. Then the wolves had another favorite stunt. When they came upon a herd of caribou out in the open country the wolves would take up stations across the country in relay fashion. Maybe it's instinct, but it was so cunning that it always struck me as being a well-thought-out scheme. One relay of wolves would run the caribou for a while, then another fresh section of the pack would shoot in and take up the chase, and so on until the caribou dropped.

My first huntin' trip in Alaska was with Sergeant Frank Brown. That was before he married the little widow and left the army. We lit out from the fort with our packs slung over our backs in which we had ten days' rations, snowshoes, camp ax, wolf robe for bedding, rifle, and ammunition. By the first night we had climbed to the edge of the timber line. We built a camp fire, cooked supper, and curled up out in the open in our wolf robes. Next morning we struck out again, heading over the ridge of mountains toward the caribou country. Halfway up the snow-capped peaks, Brown stumbled and turned around to cuss a bit.

"Holy Smoke!" he yelled. "Sam, do you see what I see?"

Seven hundred yards below us, right where we had been a little while before, five caribou were coming up out of a ravine. They were browsing on the willow boughs and pawing the snow off the moss. That moss grows about three inches thick. It covers pretty much all of Alaska and to the caribou it is the principal article of diet. Well, we slipped out of our packs and started

crawling toward the caribou. We got as close as we dared and adjusted our sights to what we thought was the range. Both of us were new at shootin' over snow and as a result underestimated the distance. Our first bullets glanced from the frozen ground and kicked the snow in the air. The animals began to run.

"Slide up the sight, Sergeant!" I told him.

I picked the leader and he the next biggest one. We fired again. Our bullets struck just in front. Then we drew a bead once more. Crash! my bullet got the big fellow in the shoulder. He went over like a skyscraper. A moment later Brown got his animal and the rest disappeared into the timber. We skinned and dressed the caribou with our huntin' knives and piled snow and spruce boughts over the meat to protect it until we could send our pack animals for it. That would keep the ravens off, and we simply had to take a chance on wolverines not finding the cache. If they had, with their powerful claws and teeth they could have broken through easily. In Alaska the wolverine is hated worse than the hyena is in Africa.

We went down to Comet Creek and spent the night in an abandoned cabin, that had been a way station during the gold rush to Forty Mile, years before. A couple weeks later we went back for our meat, piled it on a sled, and started for the fort. It had been snowing in the meantime, so one of us would wrestle with the sled while the other went ahead to pack down the trail with his snowshoes. It was slow going, mushin' dogs along through the soft snow, and when we got up above timber

line on a range called the Devil's Backbone we ran plumb into a blizzard.

The wind was blowin' a full gale. Sheets of frozen snow as big as a plate were flyin' through the air. They were cutting our faces to ribbons and peelin' the skin off the dogs' noses. They set up a howl and refused to go on. I had to get the leader by the harness and drag him through the snow in order to keep the rest of the dogs in the collar and pulling. They were itchin' to turn around and get back into the timber line for shelter.

Well, we made it over the summit all right and down to our huntin' camp, where we hibernated for four days waitin' for the storm to break. We thought the return trip with the meat would be easier from here on. But that's where we were fooled. The trail went down a forty-five-degree slope over a glacier, where we had to use our brakes, which were two iron claws attached to the under side of the sled. When the brakes were not in use they would remain up against the under side of the sled. When dropped down, a man would ride on them and his weight would dig the iron claws into the ice, preventin' the sled from overrunnin' the dog team.

On this occasion the brake apparatus broke. The claws lost their grip on the ice and we started to toboggan. Sled, dogs, meat, Brown, and I all went shootin' the chutes to the bottom of the glacier until we brought up in a snow bank along the edge of a creek.

"Get the dogs!" Brown yelled. "Stop 'em quick!"

Huskies and malamutes will fight each other at the winkin' of an eye. Here they were all mixed up in a

pile, tearin' and snarlin' like mad. Brown and I dived in and choked and kicked until we managed to pull 'em apart. Then we straightened out the team, gathered up our load and went skidding down the mountain to the fort.

Another time I was out with "Chief" Kitch, an old veteran of the regulars and a jolly good fellow. He and I did considerable mule packing together, and when we had field sports at the fort the Chief and I usually teamed it off in the packing race. In these contests two men had to run a hundred yards, get a mule, put the pack saddle on him, load two bags of grain, tie 'em on, and then gallop the mule back over the hundred-yard course. The team making the quickest time got first money. Kitch and I never lost a race.

Kitch was a good pal on a hunt. You see, he had tracked bear and moose in the Maine forest where he grew up. We went out in the early fall before the snow had settled anywhere exceptin' on the high peaks. We took three head of pack horses, stopped the first night at a deserted cabin, and next day started for a ramble. We were on a spur of Mount Walcott, the summit where Mission Creek and American Creek and Comet Creek all start flowing in different directions. Luck was with us. Right above, outlined against the horizon, was a caribou, with huge antlers like the forked branches of a tree. We crept low under the crest of the hills, working our way from one bit of cover to another. Kitch whispered to me, "Keep to the right, or the wind will give him our scent."

"Whew!" whispered Kitch under his breath. The whole top of the mountain was covered with caribou. We could see them almost as far as the eye could reach. I could hardly believe my eyes, and the sight like to struck us dumb.

"Great jumpin' Jehoshaphat!" was all Kitch could say. It wouldn't have been fair to shoot into a herd like that. Those high-powered bullets of ours would have penetrated three or four caribou without killing all of them and some would have had to crawl away to die a slow death. No real sportsman would shoot meat like that. Only some damn fool green chechahco would be guilty of such an offense. Tom Kessie told me once of a greenhorn who stumbled onto one of these big herds and started knockin' 'em off. He kept on until he killed forty caribou, and then just left 'em there to rot. Later he made the second mistake of boasting about it until both the Indians and the white men were after him and he had to skin out of Alaska to keep from bein' strung up.

Kitch and I waited until a big bull got off to one side in advance of the herd, ready to lead the way. I pulled down and bagged him with a single shot. Then the herd started milling like sheep until another bull stepped out. Kitch picked that one off. The herd set to milling again until a third bull went into the lead. We got him, too. By that time the herd was moving over the crest of the mountain, their hoofs rattling on the rocks like the low rumble of thunder. We followed them up to the crest, and there below us, stretching all the way down

the mountain and into the ravine and up onto another spur, was a moving mass of stampeding caribou. They had been gathering for the winter and there must have been fully twenty thousand spread out before us.

Comet Creek was one of our best hunting grounds. One day I was going up over the side of it and old Jack Hardy, the fellow who had been in the British navy, was stalking on the other side. After a bit I saw a small herd of caribou across the ravine on another plateau. They looked bigger than the Barren Land animals. "Timber caribou," I thought, a species that go in small bands instead of in huge herds like the caribou of the Barren Lands. They were the first I'd ever run across and I was anxious to get a crack at them, even if they happened to be out of ordinary rifle range. At an elevation of forty-five degrees it was claimed that our rifles would carry three miles. Now was the chance to try mine out.

I ran the sight up to twelve hundred yards, lay down on the snow, jammed my elbows into the crust, put my bandolier in front of me and let fly with my first shot. The caribou just turned and looked. I raised my sight several hundred yards and fired again. The caribou took up a trot for a little way, then slowed down again. I raised the sight for the third time and fired. This time I saw the bullet strike just in front of them. At last I had the range. My sight was at eighteen hundred yards! I pulled the trigger once more and brought one of them down. They were loping now, but that didn't make so much difference so long as I had the range. I fired two

more times. Both bullets missed by a few yards. The third bullet brought down another caribou. Slipping in a new clip of bullets, I began again. After dropping a third the others disappeared over the crest. Well, after that I forgot all about being tired and started for where the animals had dropped. Hardy got there about the same time. He had seen the herd before I had but never thought they were close enough to hit. Then to his amazement he had seen them drop one after another in front of his eyes.

"Ye bloody blighter," he exclaimed, "ye were shootin' 'em at better'n a mile."

We'd never seen such big fellows. Their antlers were four times as thick as my forearm, bigger than the calf of my leg, and they averaged better than twenty points.

Later we rawhided the meat to camp. Rawhiding means draggin' the whole animal over the snow. We lashed the three of them together and started draggin' the string down the mountain side. The heavy hair coat of the caribou slips easily over the crusted snow. All at once those carcasses started exceedin' the speed limit. Once under way, there was no stopping them. The whole tandem, carcasses, men and dogs, went whizzing down the hill over the crust until we hit soft snow. Then there was another hell of a fight between the dogs. You bet, life on the trail never got tiresome.

Sergeant McGowan was another big strappin' fellow, with a red face and a red mustache, who took naturally to huntin'. McGowan had the reddest mustache I ever saw in this man's army. Well, Mac had

hunted deer up on the northern Michigan peninsula before joining the army, but he was new to caribou. We spotted two fine bulls one day and began crawlin' up on them, from one rock to another. By circling around so the wind was toward us we worked up to within seventy-five yards of them.

"Where shall I aim?" McGowan whispered.

"Six inches back of the shoulder, and six inches up from the brisket, and you'll get the heart. Take it easy."

We fired at the same moment. My animal made several jumps and dropped. McGowan's kept on going. But he was mortally wounded and fell a moment later. When we dressed them we found both shot square through the heart. But the thing I remember most about that jaunt with McGowan was a fight between two bulls. We heard a commotion in the brush and peering through saw two big fellows hard at it, to settle who was to be boss of the herd. It was a real fight, with no seconds to wave towels and no gong to announce time out between rounds. We came upon them just in time to see the two brace themselves and then charge head on like battering rams. Their antlers crashed together. Then they sparred and pushed and twisted back and forth, tearing up the ground and breakin' down trees. With a terrific jerk they wrenched their horns apart again. Backing up once more, they braced themselves and raced to another collision. Their horns crashed, and they began wrestling all over again. This went on until they both dropped from exhaustion, making two more easy kills for our string.

Once in my rambles amid the Alaskan mountains I found two skulls with interlocking antlers, grim evidence of a fight to a draw. Sometimes bulls will get their horns locked together, wear themselves out, and die in the dueling embrace of the caribou.

Hightower was the butt of all the razz specialists around the fort for quite a while as a result of a bout he had with a caribou. "High" and Turnquist had been out huntin' when the former shot a caribou but didn't kill it. Grabbin' his huntin' hatchet, he ran up to finish the big fellow with a clout on the head. The caribou lunged to his feet and charged him. High caught its antlers and drove its head to the ground. Then he and the caribou started to sidestep and roll on the ground. High couldn't let go for fear of being gored, and Turnquist daren't shoot for fear of hittin' his pal. So that caribou and Hightower just played leapfrog with each other all the way down the hill. For a time it looked as though it might be an even match, but when they both went over an embankment together and lit in a creek bed Hightower had a momentary advantage and finished off the caribou with one smash of his hatchet.

CHAPTER XI

FROM PRECIPICE TO PRECIPICE

I Could Hear the Wind Whistling in St. Peter's Whiskers When That Bull Moose Lashed out—Another One Charged Us and He Stood Fully Ten Feet High—Across the Peaks at the Head of Mission Creek—Tracking Mountain Sheep Among Glaciers and Avalanches.

SEVERAL weeks later I passed Hightower and Turnquist on the trail, mushin' toward the fort.

"Been wrastling any more caribou, Big Boy?"

Turnquist answered for him. "High's off caribou at present, Sam. But if he hadn't been quick on the trigger he'da had a wrestling match with a bull moose, and that wouldn'ta been so good, eh, High?"

Old Hightower was always in a tight corner or just out of one. He had been creeping along through some willows and buck brush near our up-country hunting camp. Suddenly he heard a crash behind him. Instead of his stalking moose, a moose was after him. They'll do that now and again. It was chargin' right down on him. High wheeled, jerked his rifle to his shoulder, and cut loose. He dropped that huge moose right at his feet. Matching wits with a bull moose is skeery business.

They're a lot harder to find than caribou, and harder to kill when you find 'em. A wounded caribou will try to run if the hunter isn't right on top of him. But a wounded moose will show fight, and plenty of it. You see, moose don't travel round in big herds the way caribou do, so they're more independent. The caribou has feet that make him able to walk on top of soft snow, but a moose cuts through, so he keeps to the sheltered ravines and gullies, or a few will stay in a small area and tramp down the snow. Cutting through the snow like they do keeps them from making much headway, and a practical hunter can often overtake them on snowshoes.

If you want to shoot moose and save the antlers to show the doubting Thomases back home, the time to go out is in the fall. A female caribou has antlers same as a bull, but a cow moose is a mulley. And the bull moose himself loses his huge spread of antlers along in January. They start growing again in the spring, jumpin' right out from a little button under the hide. They are covered with a velvety skin which stays on till the fall of the year. The antlers are mature then and the skin starts to peel off. Along about that time you often see a moose with what appears to be a bunch of rags hangin' on his horns. To get off that dry skin he will rub his antlers through the bushes and trees, and when it is off he is ready for combat. He sounds his challenge call and is out for a real fight-to-the-finish scrap with any other bull moose who is game to answer him.

That's the time to fool Mr. Moose and attract him with a false call. The Indians do it better than the white

man. They take the shoulder blade of a moose and rub the bone against a tree to make it sound like a bull rubbin' his horns. If there is a bull moose in the neighborhood that nearly always brings him. Or they imitate the call of the cow. The bull moose hears it from where he is hid in the willows. Then he sniffs the air and makes for the sound. As for me, I always have better luck goin' after the moose than makin' him come to me. There was a moose lick five or six miles below the huntin' camp on Comet Creek. The water from a little spring ran down through the middle of it and the game would congregate there to drink. You could see their hoof tracks and their teeth marks where they would scoop up the black salty mud. So we decided to build a little platform away up in the trees, above the line of scent.

The moose usually stays under cover in the willows and brush during the day, venturing out about dusk when everything is quiet. It was along in October when I first tried my luck up on that tree-top platform. It was cold for the season, so I took along my wolf robe and rolled up in it as I lay waiting for victims. The hours went by slowly, and even the fur robe didn't keep me from getting stiff with cold. At last there was a rustling and crackling in the brush. I raised up on my elbows and saw a giant bull moose step out into the open. He stayed there with his head drawn back, sniffing the air. My, what a magnificent fellow he was. Just the sight of those massive shoulders and wide-spreading antlers gave me a thrill. After satisfying his curiosity and thirst he headed toward the brush again. I fired, aiming just be-

hind the fore shoulder. The bullet went through. He pawed the air a few times and then went over like some forest giant.

Another time I went out with Carl Sundberg, the big Swede, who had been in the cavalry. We started off toward the rocky peaks at the head of Mission Creek, into the mountain-sheep country. Night caught us when we were still miles away from the up-country hunting camp. We hadn't started with much food and when I asked the Swede what rations he had left he reached into his bag and pulled out a lone can of wienerwurst.

That was all we had between us.

"Ay tank there bane fish in the crick," he grinned.

There were and we lost no time in catching a string of grayling. Then we had the good luck to stumble onto an old sheet-iron stove and a gallon syrup can that some prospector had abandoned. We put the grayling in the can to cook, and also set the tin of sausages on the stove to heat. As there wasn't any salt or pepper to be had we conceived the idea of flavoring the fish with our sausages.

Bang! There was a loud report. My first thought was that somebody was taking a crack at us with a rifle. But it was merely the sausage can. We had forgotten to plug a hole in it so there would be an escape for steam. So it had exploded, sending wienerwurst all over the landscape, and also all over the Swede and me. So we just ate fish.

Late that night we reached the hunting cabin on the other side of Mount Walcott, where we finished off our

supper with a can of beans. Next morning I told the Swede I intended going into the mountains for sheep. He didn't want to go along.

"Ay bane goin' to the moose lick." You see, he didn't care much for high altitudes. It made him dizzy and he'd always have to hike down in a hurry to get over his fear of tumblin' off a precipice.

That night I returned to camp empty-handed and all the Swede brought in was the pelt of a big wolf he had potted. At that rate it looked as though the boys at the fort might have to go without meat. The day following I took a turn at the moose lick, parking myself in the tall grass. I was about to give up in despair when dark came on and the wolves began snoopin' around. I was just about to plug one and call it a day when I heard a sound down by the lick. Laying low and keeping still, I heard it again. It was coming closer and in a few seconds I could see a big dark patch at the edge of the brush. It was a moose, and he was splashin' in the mud and water. He came nearer and nearer until he was within about sixty yards of where I crouched. All at once he came to a stop and started to sniff the air. I don't know whether he caught the scent of me or of the wolves, but before he could bolt I pulled down on him. He gave a lunge into the air, bounded into the brush, and disappeared into the night.

I didn't see how I could have missed, so kicking off my wolf robe I dashed toward where he had disappeared. Well, I wasn't watching my footing and the next

thing I knew I had plunked into a hole and then taken a nose dive into the bushes.

"Damn the luck," I cussed, "now I've lost him for sure."

But as I started to raise up something whizzed past either side of my head. I broke all speed records in flopping backward. That moose had taken a header right where I had, and I had tumbled down almost on top of him. In his death struggle he had drawn up both hind legs and kicked out. The moose is the largest hoofed animal in all North America, so if my head had been a few inches further to the right or left, one hoof or the other would have nailed me and he and I would have gone to Kingdom Come together.

I just somersaulted out of the way, watched him get a few remaining kicks out of his system, dressed and cached him, and returned to camp.

Swede Sundberg didn't go with me on my next hunting expedition from the fort.

"Ay bane no good yumpin' from precipice to precipice," he said.

"Well, Sam, ay bane the champion yumper of Alaska, so take me," sang out Riley Hagan.

Hagan, you will recall, was the bird who had told me all the cock and bull stories about Alaska when we were comin' up the coast on the transport. "Riley" wasn't his name at all. That was the name of his mule, so we called him that, too—maybe because he could carry so much! He wasn't much over five feet high, but he was stocky and strong like an ox. And you never saw Riley

in low spirits. He was always ready to go anywhere, with anybody, at any time. And he never was too tired or cold but what he could reel off a rhyme. The butt of most of his razzin' was a big bloke named Pennywell, who fancied his licker. When Riley, our poet laureate, would see him comin' he would sing out:

"Penny sick or Penny well,
Penny's always drunk as hell."

Well, Hagan and I went scoutin' through the woods and over the mountains from one ravine to another, on the lookout for moose. Along in the afternoon we came down off a ridge into Comet Creek, just about ready to give up and make for camp. We were wadin' the creek when we heard a crashin' in the bushes right ahead.

"Holy mither of all the saints," says Hagan, "what kind of shenanigans is that?"

I knew the sound well enough. It was moose horns coming together. There was a fight on between two bulls. We broke into a run, but got there too late. The bulls had caught our scent and pushed off. What a shame we had to interrupt such a grand fight as that had been. The moss and earth were torn up for yards around, the bushes were trampled down, and a dozen small trees were snapped off like lead pencils.

We stopped and listened again but couldn't hear a thing. Then we crossed a valley grown so thick with willows and buck brush we couldn't see fifty feet ahead. As we broke our way something moved past a little

opening between two clumps of willows. We both pulled up our rifles and I got in one shot before the patch disappeared. I didn't have time to tell for sure whether it was bear or moose. We made a dash for the willows. I ran around the first clump ahead of Hagan, and purty nigh bumped plumb into the biggest bull moose I ever saw. He towered up half again as tall as me and he wasn't six feet away. My shot had hit him, after all. But he still had plenty of fight in him.

He lowered his head and charged. Yea, and he would have got me, too, if one of his shoulders hadn't been knocked out. But he had to leap along on three legs and was stumblin' over the bunches of tundra—the nigger heads—just fast enough so I could keep one jump ahead of his horns. Then I got in a second shot. But he kept right on comin'. I plugged him three more times, and it didn't even slow him up.

"Get him, get him," I yelled at Hagan. "This is my last bullet."

I had been between Hagan and the moose all this time. He jumped off to one side and fired his rifle at the same moment I sent in my last shot. The big bull halted, staggered like a drunken man, made one more lunge, and fell dead.

"Great Cæsar!" said Hagan. "Do you wonder he took so much to polish him off?"

That moose stood about ten feet high, and when we measured his horns we found they had a spread of sixty-two and a half inches. When we came to dress him we found the hide on his neck almost an inch thick. My

first four bullets had been just missing the brain and plowing right under that heavy skin.

"Holy blazes," Hagan whistled as we measured him, "that ain't a moose; that's an elephant. You can eat my share of the meat, Sam. Sharin' the glory of nailin' this fellow is enough for me."

We dressed and quartered the big fellow with our hunting knives and pelt axes. Being early in the fall, the ground wasn't frozen yet. We cut a lot of small poles and drove them into the earth to make a circular stockade around the meat and then covered it over with more poles and some heavy pieces of timber. We wanted to make sure it would be all right until the pack mules came out after it.

Back at the hunting camp on Comet Creek we found Turnquist and a couple of privates named Roberts and Collins. Roberts was wet and tired and disgusted. He had shot a big moose himself, but missed a vital spot, and then had trailed it all day without success until darkness drove him in. I asked where it had happened.

"Over about ten miles to the south, in the timber."

Next morning I decided to go over there. It had been snowing in the night, but I didn't think anything of it and didn't take my snowshoes because I was bound for brush and timber country. Of course, there was a slim chance of picking up that trail. But I did find moose tracks and followed the wounded bull by the blood on the snow. Then the snow blotted them out.

Meanwhile, I had lost count of time and when it turned dark I was twelve or fifteen miles from camp. The

snow had drifted and it was hard going. I came upon a trapper's deserted wigwam, consisting of a few split logs stood on end with a layer of moss over them. A trapper will often run his traps for about a hundred and fifty miles and he will build wigwams a day's march apart so as always to have a place to sleep and thaw out his animals. Well, I piled up some spruce boughs for a bed, tried to forget how hollow I felt inside, and went to sleep. I had to get up every hour or so all night long to chunk the fire, but I was lucky to have any shelter at all.

Next morning I made a circle back over the hills, but the snow was deeper than ever and I found no tracks at all. Then I struck out for camp. With no snowshoes it was fierce going, and when the light began to fail I was still four miles from that camp. There was a short cut around the spur of the mountain, so I took it. The snow was deeper still that way and my feet felt heavy as battleships. As I started down the other side of the mountain I slipped and tumbled over into the snow, but I fell in a comfortable position and just stayed there. Right down ahead of me was a patch of timber, and as I sat recovering my breath I looked it over. Something caught my eye in that timber. I took out my glasses and blew on the lens to clear off the frost. Then I took a squint. What I saw was the horn of a moose sticking up from behind a fallen spruce tree.

Well, I forgot right then that I was tired. There was a clear slope ahead of me and I took it like a toboggan. At the bottom I started creeping cautiously along the

ravine. I still couldn't see anything except the one horn. The moose was lying down. I got within two hundred feet of him and was looking for an opening to get a shot when he caught my scent. With a bound he got to his feet and broke for the heavy timber, while I pumped two bullets into him.

Just as he disappeared there was a noise over to my right and another moose sprung up. I fired three times and hit him with all three bullets, the last one bringing him down just as he reached the timber. He was dead when I got to him, so I ran right on in the direction the first moose had taken. I heard a crash and made for it. That first moose had caught his horn on a spruce tree as big around as my arm. It snapped off like a straw, and tree and moose went down together. The bull rolled over, tried to get up, and then fell back dead.

By the time I had dressed the two of them and cached the meat under the snow and spruce boughs the last of daylight had gone. I couldn't see six feet, and the country between me and the hunting cabin was broken mountain and barren country piled high with drifts. In places the snow was five feet deep and I went in almost to my shoulders with every movement. That trip certainly taught me a lesson. After that my snowshoes went everywhere I did in the winter, whether there was snow or not.

I knew I could never get back to camp by wallowing in the drifts, so I made a sort of substitute for snowshoes by cutting spruce bushes and flattening them down as best I could to make a kind of mattress. Hold-

ing them with both hands I tried moving them along under me as I crawled on all fours. The idea worked. Those boughs kept my weight from sinking into the snow, and I crawled along for more than a mile. The soft snow got up my sleeves and down my neck. My outside clothing was frozen stiff and underneath I was wringing wet. I thanked my stars that I'd had five years of life in Alaska to toughen me. I was nearer giving up the ghost that night than in any experience I can remember—nearer, even, than the day I lay in the ditch in the Argonne ten years later with German machine-gun bullets ripping through my pack.

I crawled until I reached the top of the ridge that ran down to Comet Creek. The wind had swept the snow off down to the moss, and I could make better progress. But it was past midnight when I finally staggered into camp.

"We didn't give you up, Sam," Hagan sang out. "Allow me to offer you some light refreshments."

Light refreshments! I dived into the caribou stew and potatoes with both feet in the trough. After being out a few hours on the trail in Alaska you can eat as much as three ordinary men. You eat and eat until you think you are full, and then you start all over and eat just as much again. I guess that's the way the Russians get their huge appetites. It's no wonder you don't find any spindling invalids in Alaska. It took a strong constitution just to digest the kind of meals we ate three times a day. With food under my belt again I felt as well

as ever and started to thaw out in front of the fire while Hagan began another of his songs:

"Oh, Sam went out to shoot a moose;
And the moose kicked Sammy's eyeteeth loose.

That little experience didn't dampen my ardor in the least. I had simply demonstrated my dumbness by not takin' along a pair of snowshoes. Nor did I give up hope of finding mountain sheep. I knew they were up there on the peak somewhere and I couldn't see any reason why I couldn't get them. At any rate, it was good sport scouring the high mountains for 'em, and besides, mountain sheep is the rarest and most prized meat in Alaska.

I found out that the best way to hunt mountain sheep was to go alone. If two chaps go together they just naturally can't keep from talkin' a bit, and those Alaskan sheep have ears as sensitive as the microphone on a submarine detector. Besides, most of the boys smoked, and that's another sure way of giving yourself away to wild game. Then, too, there were a lot of fellows like Swede Sundberg who couldn't stand the high altitudes, and there ain't no chance of gettin' mountain sheep from below. No matter where they are, each flock has a sentinel stationed on watch. The minute he sees or smells anything suspicious he lets out an alarm bleat and the whole flock bounds away in a jiffy without giving the hunter a chance to even draw a bead on them. So the only thing to do is to climb up to the very tops of the Alaskan mountains. If you sight sheep on the way down you have perhaps a one in ten chance of getting your

LITTLE ROCK, ARK.

game because if the lookout discovers you and the flock stampedes you still have a chance to get in a shot or two.

So with snowshoes on my back this time, I went up into the glacier peaks around Mount Walcott again, searching in every direction with my high-powered field glasses. There are no trees up there and very little moss—just crags and canyons and precipices and loose boulders. I thought I could see the horns of a ram half hidden around a jutting rock. There was a lot of loose sliding rock around there, from the size of my fist to boulders eight feet thick, and with the rubber-soled shoes I was wearing I could leap from one rock to another without making any noise. Well, at one point I gave a leap across a five-foot space to another flat rock to get a better look. But as my weight landed on it that darned rock began to move. It had been rather delicately balanced, and my weight gave it a start down the mountain. The moment I felt it moving I left it with a bound, and not a second too soon, for it went thundering down into the valley carrying an avalanche of hundreds of tons of loose rock with it. I had saved myself by an eyebrow, but I had lost the sheep.

All I got for my trouble on that tour of the high ranges was the thrill of saving my neck from that rock avalanche. But the first chance I got I went back there. This time I watched my step and did a lot of my maneuvering, half crawling and half walking. Well, I was crossing a place where the water trickling down from a melting glacier had made a coat of slick green moss over a smooth boulder. And as I gingerly picked my way

across it I had another little flirtation with St. Peter. A small rock that I stepped on shot out from under me, and the next thing I knew I was on the back of my neck, tobogganing down over that wet, slippery moss. Ninety feet below me was the edge of a two hundred foot precipice, with jagged rocks in the ravine that stuck up like a flock of church steeples. I was ten feet from the edge—ten feet from the Pearly Gates—when I got a three-finger hold on a point of solid rock. It wouldn't have held my weight more than a minute. As I caught it, stopping so sudden and puttin' on the brakes with a jerk sort of swung me around so I could reach a larger rock with my other hand. I caught it just in time, too, and lay there a few minutes collectin' my breath. I was bruised from head to foot, my clothes were torn, and my hands were ripped and bleeding. This sheep-huntin' pastime was a bit more'n I'd figured on.

"Well, Sam, you old Swiss yodler, are you goin' up them glaciers after mountain sheep again?" Hagan laughed when he saw me startin' out on my next jaunt.

"Sure thing!" I'd made up my mind to get a sheep now or kick the bucket trying.

"Well, if you're gonna ramble around on that slidin' rock any more, Sam, I guess you better kiss the gang good-bye."

The third time proved to be the time when my luck turned. I had another tricky go with that loose rock but I found sheep. Over on another spur of the mountain I sighted a flock, with a fine big buck lyin' on watch. The minute I saw those tremendous spiral horns through

my field glasses I determined to get that old boy if it was my last shootin' expedition on this earth.

Once more I stepped on what I thought was solid rock, and once more that old mountain played me a dirty trick. The rock turned under my weight, lettin' my foot down into a hole. If it had started to slide it would have mashed my leg to a pulp. But it held fast, although it loosened tons of rock right above. Loose shale, little stones, and big boulders were bouncing past, a foot from my head, as I dodged back and forth with my foot still caught tight. The dust from the avalanche was so thick I couldn't see twenty feet down the mountain. And every time I wiggled I thought the big rock that held me would go. But it didn't move any more. When the main mass of rock had stopped sliding I began to loosen the shale around my knee. That big rock still held, so I dug out more shale. Then very slowly I began to wiggle my foot out of there. It took half an hour to get free, and I finally crawled over to solid footin'.

Two or three hundred yards above, I reached the all-the-year-round snow line. The sun had softened the crust here so I could get a footin' without making any noise, but my fine flock of sheep had gone.

"Oh, well," I thought, "once more I am lucky to be alive, and as long as I'm here I'll go up to the top of this peak."

So I climbed on up to the summit. I looked down. And there I saw five big bucks only four hundred yards away. They were standin' up, on the alert, lookin' in the direction from whence the noise of that slidin' rock had

come. I figured out my range carefully, drew out an extra clip of ammunition to have it ready, and took aim at the big leader.

My bullet brought him down. The other four bounded into the air like streaked lightning and bolted down the rocks. One of them actually jumped over a twenty-foot precipice, landing on a jagged rock, poised a flash and then kept right on leaping. But I had a position that commanded the whole valley. They couldn't get out of my sight no matter which way they bounded, and I potted them all, one after the other, with my two clips of ammunition. For sheer blind luck, that shoot beat almost any experience I ever had in my life—except perhaps an encounter or two with bears, and of course that Argonne Forest affair during the war.

CHAPTER XII

KEEPING THE OLD RIFLE HOT

"Him Crazy Bear"—I Jumped Aside Just in Time to Keep Him from Landing on Top of Me—Three Bear Fights in One Day—The Chagrin of Red Whiskers McGowan.

IF YOU want a little fun that will put a marcel wave in your whiskers and stand your hair on end, just devote your time to trailin' bear for a while. Huntin' caribou, moose, and mountain sheep is great sport, but when you go out "loaded for bear" you're liable to bump into the biggest few minutes of excitement that Alaska has to offer.

It was while I was doing my time on the telegraph line down at Tanana Crossing that I had my first go at bear huntin'. I dropped into John Martin's cabin one morning and found the mail carrier there. It was early fall, with about ten inches of snow down, and he had been trekking the mail across the Alaskan mountain range from Valdez to Chicken Creek with a horse and sled. He was going along a little embankment with brush on the upper side when the horse gave a snort and swung off down the trail. Both shafts of the sled snapped in two. A big brown bear had broken out of the brush

and was calmly stalkin' along. The mail carrier didn't have his rifle handy, but he couldn't have used it even if he had because he had his hands full holding the frightened horse. When he got it calmed down the bear had disappeared.

The mail carrier hitched the horse and followed the bear a little way. He found all kinds of trails where it had been circlin' around there and where it had broken into an Indian cache. But it was getting dark so he went back to his sled and came on into Tanana Crossing. He was just telling the story to Martin when I got there, and both of these old-timers were cussin' out bears in general. You see, the bear prowls around the moose and caribou country and kills the game that the hunters need, so all the old-timers and prospectors have it in for him.

"There's your chance, Sam," said Martin. "You're always wantin' to meet up with b'ar. Now go to it and say 'Howdy.' "

So off I started next morning, so plumb cocksure I was goin' to get that bear pronto that I didn't take anything but a moose steak sandwich for grub. I shoved it in my pocket and put on my belt of ammunition. My gun was one of the old service rifles, the kind we used before the army adopted the Craig-Jorgeson. It was the most accurate gun I ever had, but it was only a single-shot weapon, and you had to reload it every time you fired. I got so I could tuck a half dozen cartridges between my fingers and then slip 'em in without wastin' time reachin' in the pouch, and that way I could shoot almost as fast as with a Winchester repeater.

The Indian cache the mail carrier had spoken about was seventeen miles from the telegraph station, and it took me almost all day to make it on foot. But it was worth going that distance just to see what a hungry bear can accomplish when he is after food.

The Chistachina Indians knew just about all there was to know about bears and wolverines, and they had made what they thought was a bear-proof cache. They had cut off a clump of trees about a foot in diameter, leaving about eight feet of trunk standing. On top of these trunks they built a regular little log cabin about four feet high, made of five-inch poles, with a canvas stretched over the whole thing and one big pole bent down and wired on top to make it extra secure.

The cache was full up with camp equipment and food. There was a sheet-iron stove up there, a collection of cooking pots and kettles, a tent, and a supply of the Indians' favorite dessert. To make this dessert the Indian women render a kettleful of moose tallow, then they fill it full of huckleberries or blueberries and let it cool. No white man would ever give up apple pie or chocolate cake in favor of that mixture as a dessert. But it's just like ice cream to the Indians. They had enough of it in the cache to provide the finishing touch for all their banquets for a year to come.

The bear had smelled that tallow, and he had smelled the meat. The Indians had the carcasses of three moose, quartered and frozen, stowed away in there. Now a good-sized moose will dress between seven hundred and a thousand pounds, and there must have been close

to two tons of meat in that cache, besides the other things. And that maraudin' bear had gone and tipped the whole works over like it was a mere cock of hay.

Being all wired together, the cache had held even when it was knocked off the posts, and Mr. Bear had the extra job of smashing into it. By the looks of what he had done, he must have had tusks and claws like grappling hooks. He had torn off splinters four feet long and three inches thick by driving his huge teeth into the spruce. And he had hurled those splinters thirty-five feet away. You would swear it was the work of a man with a good husky set of tools. He had dug through logs and wire and canvas until he got that meat and tallow, and then he must have celebrated Christmas and Thanksgiving all in one banquet.

After a bear eats he sleeps. I followed up the tracks of this glutton to where he had made three different beds of moss under spruce trees, and each bed looked big enough for an elephant. If there is anything a bear likes it's that Indian dessert of grease and berries. This old boy must have thought he was in his seventh heaven when he got into that cache, and evidently he had gone off a ways, made a bed and slept for a stretch, then returned for another course, pushed off into a different place for a second snooze, and then repeated the program a third time. Anyhow, all his trekking back and forth had resulted in so many trails it was hard to figure which was the last one. Every time I thought I had struck the right path it would simply lead off into the woods for a ways and circle round that smashed cache again. I

stayed with my bear puzzle, though, and at last hit a track that led off toward the Big Tokio River. Well, I was so excited now that I could already see that bear in range of my gun. But I followed the tracks until dark without overhauling him.

I hadn't brought my wolf robe or a blanket of any sort, or even a piece of hardtack for rations. But I had no intention of going back to camp and giving up such a good chance. Not on your life. I gathered some dead wood, built a roaring fire, and lay down beside it. The front of me roasted but my back felt like ice. So I got up and built another fire and parked myself between the two, and was dead to the world in two shakes. But it didn't seem like more than a few minutes had flown by until the cold woke me and I had to hunt more wood to stoke up my fires. I spent the night takin' naps and playin' fireman. I didn't dare make too big a blaze for fear sparks would catch my clothes, and since they were all I had, that would have been awkward.

At first streak of dawn I took to the trail again. I passed other game tracks, but there wasn't any danger of confusing them with my bear's. The impression of his paw in the snow was wider than the combined span of my two outspread hands. I never have seen such a big bear track, before or since. Well, his trail dropped down into the valley and across the Big Tokio. In October it was already frozen over, but not very thick. Out in the middle was a hole with a thin film of ice just gathering over it. Old man Bruin had busted through. I whistled to myself. Any bear to break through ice that thick

would have to be the size of an ox. On the other side of the Big Tokio I picked up his trail again. But that cold bath had made Mr. Bear decide it was high time to find a warm place to put up for the winter. The track circled around through the valleys and ravines and over the hills. Once in a while I could see where it stopped at other bear dens, but I suppose they all proved too small for him to crawl in or he probably would have chased one of his cousins out and jumped his claim. All day I trailed him until I couldn't see any longer. That night I camped out again, without blankets. It was down around forty below, so this time I built three fires and tried to huddle up and keep warm between them. But by the time I got the third one chunked up, the first would be dyin' down. So it was one busy night.

Next day the trail headed right over the mountains and I followed all morning and all afternoon, and when it got dark I was still following it. But no sign of Mr. Bear. By now I was so hungry that I figured if I did find him I'd be so ravenous I'd almost be willing to walk up and take a bite out of him raw. You see, one moose sandwich isn't a bad meal for a husky man, but it doesn't go so very far on a three-day tramp at forty below. In all, I tracked that bear more than fifty miles, winding in and out and up all the time. That third morning it was snowing and the trail kept leading toward higher country. The farther I went the denser the snowstorm. Then a wind came up and it began to drift. So my bear tracks were wiped out. I scoured around in every direction but couldn't find a trace of them again. That bear

must have been one of the biggest in Alaska, possibly the daddy of 'em all, and I had lost him. Well, there was just one consoling thought in my mind as I turned back. I was headed for food!

I couldn't make the station that night, but luck was with me. When crossing the Big Tokio I sighted an empty trapper's cabin just at dark. I opened the door and made one leap for the cupboard. It wasn't exactly as bare as Old Mother Hubbard's, but it wasn't any hotel icebox either. The only thing there besides dirty dishes was a handful of rice in a pasteboard box and about a tablespoonful of old bacon grease in a frying pan. I emptied the rice in a tin can and boiled it on a sheet-iron stove. Then I put the bacon grease in it for flavoring. I know I've had a lot better meals, but I can't remember any that tasted better as long as it lasted.

I was just rolling into the telegraph station next day when I met four Indians from the Lake Mansfield tribe starting out with a dog sled. They gave a whoop. "Where you goin'?" I asked.

"Indians go find you," the leader said. "You no come back. Sergeant him think you lost. Him send out Indians look for body."

"You tell sergeant the body him right here!" I replied. "Yep, and with the biggest appetite that ever hit this corner of Alaska."

Then I told the Indians about my bear hunt and the size of the tracks, and how that bear had led me all over that section of the North.

"Him crazy bear," they said.

Sometimes these crazy bears, as they call 'em, will roam almost all winter before settlin' down for their long sleep. Ordinarily, a bear will hibernate right after the first snowfall, after the blueberries are covered up and they can't find anything to eat. Well, those berries are very sweet, so he gets as fat as a pig. When he comes out in the spring about all he can find are the ants and woodworms in the stumps and rotten logs. He is a pretty ragged looking specimen at that time, and so ravenous nothing will stop him if he smells meat.

Hightower and Turnquist can offer a little testimony on that subject. Those two chaps, along with Top Sergeant Blakely, had killed a moose and were skinning it when Blakely happened to look up the hill above the ravine where they were.

"By Jiminy, there's another moose," he yelled.

He was so surprised that in the scramble when everybody jumped for their guns the sarge got Turnquist's by mistake. Now, Blakely was a rattling good shot and a fine two-fisted soldier, but he certainly got buck fever that day. Instead of firin' the rifle he began to work the bolt back and forth and all he was adoin' was ejectin' the shells. Then they saw it wasn't a moose, but a big brown bear that had smelled the fresh meat.

"You crazy blankety blank blank!" Turnquist yelled, forgetting he was talkin' to the top sarge, "gimme my gun."

Blakely kept right on with his monkeyshines and Turnquist grabbed the rifle away from him. He took aim and fired, but by that time the bear had been scared off

by all the yelling and had disappeared in the brush. Well, if Blakely had died the next day his funeral service had already been preached by Turnquist. And how that boy could distort the King's English. At such close range any half-baked hunter could have killed any bear with one bullet. So it was a month before Blakely could live down that bonehead play.

"One day I read a book down in John Ott's cabin which claimed there were more than a dozen different kinds of bear in Alaska. But the ones we heard about were the browns and the blacks, and some grizzly. The brown bears were the biggest, and of course the largest of 'em all are the famous brown bears that live far to the south on the Alaskan peninsula in the direction of the Aleutian Islands, and the bears of Kodiak Island.

Gettin' bear isn't so easy. Even if the wind is blowin' right toward you, it oftentimes will get milled around through the ravines in such a way that your scent will be carried back to a bear. I was up there about five years before I bagged my first one. It was out on the North Fork of the Forty Mile River, ten miles or so from the fort, in the fall. I had on my rubber shoepacks and wasn't makin' a sound as I crept along over the rocks up along the edge of timber line. There were blueberry bushes up there and I figured I might possibly find a bear samplin' them. I guessed right. Sure enough, there was a big black chap standin' on his hind legs, strippin' off the berries. The same minute I spotted him his head bobbed up in the air. He took one sniff and plunked down on all fours. I pulled the trigger quick, but it was

too quick and my bullet landed in a chunk of moss. The bear started to walk away. There wasn't time to move my sight, so I held higher on him and pulled down again. My bullet caught him in the shoulder and he stumbled to the ground, clappin' at his side with his paws. I fired again and put a streak of daylight right through his nose. As he got up and broke for the brush I pumped my fourth into his hams. It sure is remarkable the way an Alaskan bear can assimilate lead without showin' any effects from same. There was this old boy chargin' pell-mell down over a hill, with me sprintin' behind him, follow-in' the trail of blood. It led through the brush for fifty yards and stopped in front of a thick spruce tree. I could see where he had crawled back under the boughs. I just poked my gun barrel in under there and gave him a punch on the snout. He didn't move. So I gave him another poke to make sure he wasn't playin' possum. Then I rolled him out. That was my first bear.

When I was on the fishin' camp assignment, catchin' salmon in my big wheel for all the boys livin' at the fort, once in a blue moon or so I'd spot a bear sittin' right in the river spearin' his own breakfast. When a fish would come along he would give it a swift cuff with his paw and send it wigglin' through the air, high and dry out on the shore. I never bothered those chaps simply because fish-eatin' bears are pretty poor eatin' themselves, just like ducks that live on fish.

"If you vould haf goot bear meat you shust moost go right avay queek from der rivers," as old John Ott once said to me. "Dem bears vot eat fish *raus mit* 'em!"

So, like all hunters after meat, I kept to the hills when I was trailin' bear. On my very next trip out I ran into another. He was a big brown bruin, so wabbly with fat that his flesh just rippled under his fur. When I came on him he was after more berries and goin' right on layin' up more fat. I was leery about goin' too close for fear he would get my scent. So I stopped when I got within two hundred yards of him and blazed away. My first bullet hit him all right enough, but he ran into the brush while I peppered four more into that mass of fat.

To reach the spot where he disappeared I had to make a circle up a hill and then another circle up to the right. Just as I stopped to look and listen there was a roar from up behind me. That bear was chargin' down the hill over the bushes at me like a fightin' tank tearin' through barbed wire. I began to shoot as fast as I could —once, twice, the whole clip. But Mr. Bear kept right on a-comin'. I pulled the trigger again. It only clicked.

Almost quicker'n you could wink, I jerked a clip of ammunition from my belt. Every second counted. Something was wrong with the new clip. The bullets wouldn't slip in easily. It isn't often I swear, but I sure swore then. I repeated every smokin' cussword I'd ever learned from them Arctic mule-skinners. But that didn't help the ammunition none whatever.

With only two bullets in the magazine, I jammed the bolt and fired again. The bear was only ten feet above me on the hill. The bullet struck right on the bridge of his snout, plowed on, and tore the back of his head right out. I jumped aside just in time to keep that

mountain of an animal from landing on me as he plunged down head first.

Nope, mister, I wouldn't care for any closer call than that.

The next time out I hit the trail for the same country. I knew I was on the track of bear because I could see their signs. For some funny reason a bear will often stand beside a tree and rip a piece of bark off just as far up as he can reach with his claws. Along comes another bear and sees it.

"Ha, ha," he chuckles sarcastically to himself. "Watch me, I can do a lot better than that last piker who came along this way." So up he goes on his haunches and makes his own marks. Well, I went past one tree that had three of these challenge signs on it. "Gee whiz, this must be a bears' ballroom or picnic grounds," I thought. And I wasn't so far wrong because it sure enough proved to be good bear country.

Nine miles out from the fort, along Colorado Creek, I sighted my first one. He was so busy banqueting on blueberries that I crawled up close enough to bump him off with one bullet. I dressed him and then cached him by cuttin' away the moss and puttin' him underneath on the glacial ice. You see, there's hardly any place in the whole of Alaska that you can't dig down through the moss or earth and find that glacial ice. Even in mid-summer the earth only thaws a little way down. I marked the cache with a red bandanna and made my way over to the opposite side of the mountain. Before another hour had gone by I had interrupted another bear havin'

From the Arctic they were transferred to the Mexican border. Instead of blizzards and crackling Northern lights, they now had cloudbursts, hailstorms, and rattlesnakes for a change. Woodfill leaning against flagpole.

A hunter from the Far North (on the left) keeps in practice on wild peccaries instead of moose and bear.

a party in a blueberry patch. My first shot hit too low and he started to bolt, but I nailed him with the next one. Pretty soon he was packed on ice under the moss, too.

"Pretty good day's work," said I, pattin' myself on the back. I was so satisfied with my hunt that I dropped down into the timber line toward camp. I wasn't even lookin' for any more game. The plateau I was crossin' had been burned over and was covered with fallen spruce trees and low brush. I was thrashin' my way through it, with my rifle hung over my back so I could have both hands free. There was a rustlin' in the brush over at my right. Probably an Arctic hare; there were lots of them around. I heard the same noise again, but didn't see nothin'. But twenty feet farther on there was a snarlin' growl broke out right behind me. I wheeled like a shot. There thirty feet back was an enormous brown fellow, crashin' through the bushes at me. Mebbe you think I didn't tear the rifle off my head with record speed! I turned the safety lock, but there wasn't time to even raise the rifle to my shoulder. I pulled the trigger while it was still under my arm—with that bear not over six feet away, already with all fours off the ground, makin' his final spring. He looked as big as an elephant and twice as ornery. You bet I was excited. But not enough to spoil my shootin'. I guess I'm lucky in just never gettin' so nervous as that, no matter how tight a jam I'm in. Some people begin to shake when they are scared, and some people jest don't. My accidentally bein' in the latter class saved my life twice in bear

huntin', and probably saved it several times again a bit later on when it wasn't bear but man that I had to hunt.

Gettin' that bear with one shot without takin' aim was nothin' but luck, anyway. I was usin' a semi-explosive bullet that I had ordered specially from Chicago for game huntin', and it was better than the regular issue of government bullets. The least impact would expand it and cause it to tear a big wound so an animal would bleed to death quickly. But this bear wasn't dead yet. Not by a long shot. He struck the ground two feet in front of me, and even in his death struggle he was still tryin' to get me, thrashin' and hurlin' himself about, bitin' the moss from the ground in his rage and smashin' down the bushes. Even fatally wounded as he was, he could have broken every bone in my body with a clout or two from those tremendous claws. But he didn't need another bullet. His struggles stopped in a few minutes and he lay still.

I looked up Chief Kitch when I got back to the fort that night.

"How about a little packin' trip to-morrow?" I asked him. And then I told him my little bedtime story about them three bears.

"Three in one day!" he whistled. "My hat, Sam, first thing you know you'll have the whole of Alaska depopulated of bears."

So we set out on horseback next morning, with three head of pack horses besides. For some reason, mules object to the smell of bear. They will carry moose and caribou all right, but when you start loadin' a bear on a

mule he is likely to get skittish and temperamental. We picked up the first two bear and loaded them on, and then started over the hill for the big fellow whose charge I had interrupted in midair.

"Certainly wish I had known this was bear country," Kitch said.

"I'll tell you what," I said. "You take the short cut and meet me at the cache, and I'll bring the horses around the base of the hill. Maybe you can scare up one for yourself before we start back."

Well, I wasn't halfway to the third cache when I heard a rifle shot up the hill. I took out my own rifle and fired twice. There was another shot from above in reply. That was our signal if he was successful. Kitch had got his bear, sure enough, so we dressed it and loaded it on one of the saddle horses, went up and got the big one, and rode back to the fort with four bears. Guess that was a record in that section of Alaska.

Another time I had a lucky bag when "Red Whiskers" McGowan and I were on our way back to the fort from a long caribou hunt. We had shot eleven or twelve of them, and a pack train was takin' in the meat. Mac and I and two other soldiers decided to take a short cut through the hills instead of stickin' to the trail. We were crossin' that very same plateau, headed toward a valley covered with berry bushes. I was on the lookout for bear, and when I got out my glasses sure enough I spotted one right away, gorgin' himself on berries. McGowan had been grumblin' because I had all the luck with bear.

"Here," I said, passing the glasses over to him, "now hop to it and show your stuff."

He took a look. "My God," he exclaimed. "There's three of them!"

He was right. The biggest was a she bear and she had her two cubs along. Well, the other fellows were all for makin' a rush for the berry patch, but we would have lost them that way sure. To keep the wind from carryin' our scent we went back the way we had come and then swung down a ravine to the right and then worked our way over to the hill on the other side of the bears. By creepin' around over that route we got within eighty yards of them.

"There's one for each of you," I told the boys. "You've been wailin' for bear, and here's your golden opportunity. Go to it."

The trouble was they all three got too excited. "Buck ague" we called it in the army. When they tried to aim their gun barrels were wabblin' like a broken thumb, and their shots went wild. The mother bear gave her cubs a cuff to bring 'em to attention and then all three bolted down the hill with my three companions vainly bombardin' 'em from the rear. The old bear was hit, but she kept right on agoin'.

"Why'n hell don't you shoot?" McGowan yelled at me. "Quick, Sam, she's almost to the timber."

Well, I didn't want to hog the sport, but nobody ever had to urge me twice to shoot bear. I pulled up my rifle and got the old girl in the neck. She dropped on the spot.

The other boys were still pepperin' at the two cubs, which were headed for the buck brush. I took a bead on one of them, too, and brought it down. The other disappeared in the brush. I climbed up to a little ridge that overlooked the brush. The other cub was still there, standing up on its hind legs lookin' around. He was an easy target and I got him from long range.

Well, Red Whiskers McGowan and the other two lads cussed all the way back. They were so disgusted that the only thing they could do to console themselves was to pay a visit to Hank Raymond's bar. But their hard luck was simply due to inexperience. Later on all three turned out to be crack hunters.

One day I had a visitor at the fort. It was old John Ott and he was on my trail.

"Py Gott, Sam," said John. "One of dose damt bears he been after my things. Vill you go out and shoot him for me, ya?"

John got so mad while tellin' me about it that he almost foamed at the mouth. He had staked out a claim for prospectin' a half dozen miles above his cabin and had cached his food supplies on a platform in a tree up there while he went back to his cabin for the rest of his equipment. When he returned he discovered a bear had gotten into the cache. There was flour and rice and beans scattered all over the neighborhood.

"Dot bear he spoil it so I neffer can use dot food," said John, "und he eat der bacon un der sugar. Moreofer he bash in my stove so flat like a pancake und he tear

up my tent, und he bite mit his teeth der bottom off my coffee pot. *Ach, du lieber Gott,* dot bear he spoil everything." So John had to come into the town for more provisions, and he begged me to go back with him and get that bear. The captain at the fort told me to go to it, so we started out. It was in the spring, when the snow was thawed in the valleys but was still deep on the high ground. We fought our way through snowdrifts all the way to the head of Mission Creek and then followed the creek to the cache.

I felt sure the bear would be back for another banquet on what was left of the provisions. Bears generally do that way. So I decided to stay for the night. John returned to his cabin while I went over to a hillside across the creek. I covered up with the tent that had been ripped up by the bear and tried to get a bit of sleep. About daylight I was awakened by the chattering of a little red squirrel—we called 'em "pinies" because they ate the spruce burrs. I figured by the sound that somethin' had frightened it. So I got my rifle ready and lay watchin' in that direction. There was a commotion in the brush and a moment later out came a big black bear, lumberin' along. I waited till he was a good way out in the open. There was no use takin' a chance on his being able to bolt back to cover too quick.

I had had considerable experience in night shootin', so I pulled a bead low in that hazy light. The bullet hit and knocked the bear flat. He went rollin' over and over right down the hill, and all the time I kept on

pumpin' lead into him. He was a big fellow and I didn't want to take any chance of his being able to get up and charge when he finally hit the bottom of the incline. And he didn't. A spruce log stopped him and there wasn't a kick left. I skinned and dressed him and then carried the pelt down to John's cabin.

"Well, John," I remarked as I tossed it on the floor, "do you suppose this here thing is worth a mess of flapjacks for breakfast?"

Old John was so tickled that he hugged me on the spot, and behaved like a regular cub bear himself.

"My boy," he chuckled, "I vould cook for you flapjacks till der whole damt sack of flour is up-ge-baked."

Alaska sure is a paradise for the hunter. I guess I've made that clear. And my old huntin' instincts, handed down to me from my forbears, developed along Kentuck Creek when I was a kid, came right to the front. Most of the meat we had for the fort had to be got out of the country. So I managed to work myself into a regular job of an official hunter. That was ideal sport for me. Even in my boyhood dreams I never figured I'd ever find such a happy hunting ground as this. But this Alaskan training meant a lot more than mere sport, although I didn't know it then. Whatever natural instincts I had for trekking and stalking, keeping cover and creeping up for a shot, were developed considerably. As a result, when the World War came along and my big chance with it, I was, I suppose, almost the same sort of a stalker as a redskin. Whatever may have been

my qualifications as a soldier, more than anything else I was just a woodsman and a hunter, and the time came when I was called upon to put my frontiersman's craft into service in a war of airplanes, poison gas, machine guns, and massed artillery.

CHAPTER XIII

GOOD–BYE, AURORA BOREALIS

They Put Us on Yukon Barges, and Down the River We Went—The Tragedy of a Medicine Man—The Bear That Dieted on Beer—Homeward Bound Through Bering Sea and the Aleutian Islands—At Last I Found a Girl Who Would Listen to My Yarns of the North.

I STAYED up there on the Arctic Circle at Fort Egbert just as long as I could. If I'd had my way I'd have been there yet. No country on earth can beat Alaska. If I had another chance to go up there to-morrow I'd jump at it. That North Country gets into your blood. Somehow I don't think Uncle Sam realizes how lucky he is to own Alaska.

Each army outfit that was sent north would be assigned to duty up there for a two-year hitch. But every time it came my company's turn to leave, why I simply would resign from it, join the new outfit, and stay on. When the Third Infantry pulled stakes in 1906 I changed over to Company B of the Tenth. Then when the Tenth decamped for the States I just shifted to the Sixteenth, which was a-comin' in.

"She ain't a bad country, Sam. Guess I'll stick with

you and put in another hitch up here myself," Hightower said when I joined the Sixteenth. And there were quite a few others who felt the same way. We were all set toward gettin' to be old-timers in Alaska. Then all of a sudden news came from Washington that our farthest north American army post was to be abandoned. The big gold rush to the Far North was over. No more important camps were being opened up and that Arctic fort of ours was no longer needed to help keep law and order and make life easier for prospectors on the trail of gold. Nothing much was being accomplished and Uncle Sam got tired of havin' us sittin' up there gazin' at the Northern lights. Just shippin' us our supplies was a mighty big item of expense. In the summer time everything we got had to be sent all the way up from the States to Skagway by steamer, then changed to the White Pass Railroad to be brought over the mountains, and then transferred again to the flat-bottom boats on the Yukon. Even that wasn't the end of the trouble because down at Dawson in the Klondike, the supplies all had to be unloaded and put on the lower river steamers to be brought up to us at Eagle City in the Arctic. In the winter time, if there was anything to be sent to us, it had to be brought clean across Alaska by dog sled. Another thing that made it no longer necessary for us to have a fort up there was because wireless stations were established in place of the military telegraph line.

"Well, old-timer, what are you goin' to do now?" I asked Cameron, our red-headed Irish packer, the day he started out on his last trip to the coast.

"It's back to the States I'm headed, me lad," he said, "and it's not sorry I am to be goin' either, begorry. Alaska's gettin' too tame for the likes of me."

The last I heard of that Mick he had settled down in Salt Lake City and was raising a family. When a fellow leaves the army you can bet your last four bits that he's headed for a cruise on the sea of matrimony. And in a way Cameron was right about Alaska not being the same. The Alaska of the gold rush and the free and easy life we found when we went up there nearly eight years before was now gettin' to be history. The wild days of the stampede were over, the days when miners became millionaires overnight. The old sourdoughs who were left were settling down to other occupations, huntin', trapping, fishin', with maybe a little gold panning and prospectin' on the side. The dance halls were gone, and most of the saloons. The Sheeny Kid and most of the other gamblers had beat it for a new hunting ground. Hank Raymond's was the only saloon left in Eagle City, and the town was so dead it was almost respectable.

So most of the fellows didn't shed any tears about leaving when we pulled out from Fort Egbert. But for the present they weren't sending us back to the States. They simply shifted us down the river to another fort, down at Fort Gibbon near the town of Tanana where the Tanana River empties into the Yukon. Fort Gibbon is right in the heart of Alaska, about four hundred miles down the river from Eagle City.

The thing I missed most down at Fort Gibbon was

the big-game hunting. I had given away all of my bear skins and pretty near all of my other hunting souvenirs except some sheeps' horns, because I figured I could always get plenty more.

I stayed at Fort Gibbon for about a year. Then the Thirtieth Infantry was sent up to relieve us durin' the summer. This time I wasn't quite so sure about wantin' to stay on. I liked the country but I didn't care so much about the flat region around Fort Gibbon. I sort of missed the big-game huntin'. Then, too, I figured I was due for a holiday. I had been up there over eight years and sort of wondered what it all looked like down in the States. Besides, I figured I could always go back. One of my ambitions was to explore the Barren Lands, the region between the Yukon and the Arctic Ocean that the Indians up there call the Land of Little Sticks. I wanted to go up and try my hand at huntin' musk ox and polar bear. So I decided to go to the States with my company and then return North in a year or two.

The other fellows in the old crowd were ready to leave, too—that is, all except Hightower. He didn't seem to mind Fort Gibbon. In fact, he liked any place where there was plenty of firewater. So he switched over to the Thirtieth Infantry and stayed on. I never saw him again or got any trace of him. Every time I soldiered in a new place I thought I might run into him, but I never did. I half expected to hear about him in France. If that boy had ever gotten enough French cognac in him he would have tried to clean up on the whole German army single-handed

So we left Fort Gibbon in July of 1912. They put us on flat Yukon barges, with three decks of temporary bunks rigged up and a galvanized roof over them. In that way we drifted down stream to St. Michael and the Bering Sea. Believe me, that old Yukon River is one long stream. We were days and days on the way, stoppin' now and then to take on wood for fuel. I remember one place where we tied up for a bit was called Nulato. It is one of the oldest tradin' posts in the North and dates way back to the days when the Russians owned Alaska. But a long time ago the Indians massacred all the whites in that section and now the inhabitants are these frowsy-lookin' Northern redskins. There was an old Indian buryin' ground just above the boat landin', about the queerest I ever saw. Instead of diggin' graves those Indians put up platforms, and when a member of the tribe dies they simply wrap him up in his blankets, park him on a platform, and leave him there to dry and become a mummy and finally to blow away. If he is somebody important they build a little roof over the platform, and nearly every one of them is piled up with things like pots and pans and guns and snowshoes to make sure he arrives in the happy huntin' ground with a good outfit.

These Indians around Nulato were the most superstitious I ran into in the North. They still had their own medicine men. After the white people began settin' up schools the medicine men had to think up a lot of tricks in order to keep their hold over their tribe. And there was one fellow who could have made a fortune on most

any vaudeville stage. His specialty was making his ignorant redskin followers think that bullets took no effect on him. He would carefully fix up a gun with blank cartridges and let somebody fire at him. Then as fast as it was fired he would spit bullets out of his mouth and in this way make them believe it was impossible for anyone to kill him. Well, the trick worked O. K. until some practical joker slipped a real bullet in with the blanks. Then they had to put up a new platform with a little roof on it for the body of their medicine man.

The army transport was supposed to meet us at St. Michael and ferry us back to the U. S. A. But we got to the mouth of the Yukon ahead of it and news came through that she was caught in the ice in Bering Sea, drifting hundreds of miles off her course. Just as we were about to send out a rescue ship, another wireless message advised us that the wind had veered round and parted the ice so they could come on in.

While killing time at St. Michael about the only sport we could find besides eatin' and gamblin' was to buy beer and give it to the pet bear. It belonged to the proprietor of a saloon and his bear brought him most of his trade. Everybody that went by would buy a bottle or two just to see that bear knock off the cap and drink it down. Somebody took a beer bottle and filled it up with whisky and then gave it to the bear. But the joke was on him because Mr. Bear gulped it down without battin' an eyelash.

From St. Michael we sailed down across Bering Sea

to Dutch Harbor in the Aleutian Islands, where we stopped for a day and a half to take on coal. Back of Dutch Harbor is a hill called Ballyhoo Mountain. Somebody put a book up there in a copper box, fastened down so you can't carry it away. If you climb the mountain you write your name in the book and then you automatically become a member of the Ballyhoo Club, which most of us did.

Before leaving the Aleutian Islands we visited another little town called Unalaska, one of the dampest places in the whole world. In fact it is so damp that the sides and roofs of the houses are all covered with green moss. It rained all the time we were there.

"Does it ever let up?" I asked a Russian Jew, who ran the little fur-trading store.

"Well, we've had sunshine for part of three days during the past year," he replied. "But if we have as many as ten days of sunshine in one year the people of these parts think they've gone through a drought."

From the Aleutian Islands with their snow-capped volcanoes we skirted around the southern coast of Alaska and finally got back to Puget Sound. A few days later we steamed in through the Golden Gate at San Francisco, landing at the same spot from whence I had sailed for the North eight years before. My plan was to go home for a short visit, perhaps serve in the army for a year or two in the States, and then go back to the North to spend the rest of my days livin' the life of an old sourdough. But the World War came along and upset all that.

For the rest of that year we stayed at the famous old Presidio, on the edge of San Francisco Bay. Aside from drilling and the usual daily routine of a soldier, we amused ourselves fishin' for crabs and swimmin' round the Seal Rocks. I also put in an hour or two nearly every day practicin' out on the rifle range. But bangin' away at a stationary bull's-eye was pretty tame after so many years on the trail of mountain sheep, caribou, moose, and bear up in Alaska. I hadn't been home for nine years and shortly before Christmas I began to get restless. So I asked my company commander for a transfer. It went through, but taking it meant I had to give up my corporal's stripes and drop back to the rank of buck private again. Anyhow, the next train found me headed east for Fort Thomas, Kentucky, to join the Ninth Infantry.

When I landed there everything was jake. My new captain looked over my official papers and for some reason was so impressed with the comments of my previous commanding officers that he boosted me to sergeant right off the bat. On top of that he gave me a two months' leave of absence, and with my three non-com stripes I started home as proud as an old bear with three cubs. If they'd given me a general's gold stars I wouldn't have been any more bucked.

I had broadened out and shot up so much during those years on the edge of the Arctic that the folks hardly recognized me. I found all my family, except Dad, of course, who had died before I left home, and Brother John who had disappeared. Will had quit the army

during my absence and had come home and settled down. Both of my sisters were married and livin' not far away. None of us could understand why no news had ever come from John. But he had just gone off into the blue and vanished.

That leave of absence went by quicker than any eight weeks in my whole life. The thing I couldn't get used to was seein' so many women folks. They had been pretty scarce up North. And the first thing I knew after I got back home I met one who somehow seemed different than any girl I'd ever known. I don't know just why that was. Mebbe she was a better listener than the others and liked to hear me spin yarns about Alaska. Anyhow, before I started back to camp Lorena Wiltshire and I had it all figured out how we were going to get married, and I felt like I was sittin' on top of the world. Up until then I had been too busy soldiering and chasin' wild game to pay much attention to girls. Those I saw in the North were all spoken for before I met 'em, and Lorena was the first real flame I ever had.

CHAPTER XIV

GREASERS AND GRINGOES

They Dumped Us Down in the Mesquite at Laredo—A Midnight Raid from Across the Border—The Two-Hundred-Pound Lieutenant and the Rattler—The Declaration of War.

IN THE spring of 1914, after I had been at Fort Thomas a little over a year, the Mexican mix-up came along. Villa, Carranza, and Huerta were shootin' out their little differences a bit too near the Rio Grande, so Uncle Sam ordered the Ninth Infantry down to the border.

We entrained for Texas with every one of us itchin' to have a crack at the greasers. They dumped us down in the mesquite, at Laredo, on the border, but about the only excitement we had was a brush with Carranza's army and guerrilla warfare against the rattlesnakes. Right across the Rio Grande was the little Mexican town of Nueva Laredo and one night the Mexican troops decided to pull out and blow up that burg behind 'em. They loaded everything they could take along on flat cars and then touched off fuses to destroy the city hall and the other government buildings. But they didn't stop at this, they also planted mines under the inter-

national railway and foot bridge across the river. But something went wrong with their fuses and the bridges didn't go up.

When a squad of Carranza's men tried to push across to plant more dynamite one of our platoons opened fire. Then the greasers went back and got a barrel and started to creep across the bridge behind that rolling barrel. But the boys let 'em have it right through the barrel. So the Mexicans gave it up as a bad job, hopped their train, and decamped.

The rest of my outfit went off up the river and left me to keep my eye on the supplies. There were plenty of hostile Mexicans around, but I wasn't going to do any worryin' about them. They seemed to be tryin' to see how far they could go with me, and while I was down at the river gettin' some water I heard a shot up at my camp. From the report I knew it must be an army rifle. When I went back I took a look at my rifle and found that somebody had shot it off. A bunch of Mexicans were hangin' around a little store near there and one of them must have been tryin' to get me riled up. I acted like nothin' had happened and set up my cot and went to sleep. I guess that was the best thing I could have done. Anyhow, the storekeeper told me next day that there had been bad Mexicans around, just itching to bump me off, but that when I paid no attention and went to sleep they told the storekeeper I had a lot of nerve. So they let me alone. Anyhow, my luck held out.

We had been mappin' the country for a few weeks and on our way back to Laredo we stopped where a

platoon of our cavalry was patrollin' the Rio Grande. Through one of our own spies or a leak of some sort news had just come that the Mexicans were gettin' ready to attack. So orders came from headquarters for us to stay and reënforce the cavalry. At a council of war it was decided that every able man was to get busy and help dig a trench around the camp, and also cut the mesquite brush for a considerable distance on all sides in order to give us a clear line of fire. Then we piled up sandbags above our loopholes along the top of the trench and waited for the fireworks. A week passed and nothing happened, so our outfit was called back to Laredo. But before we got there we heard that the Mexicans had attacked the cavalry post shortly after we'd left.

The greasers had crept up during the night and opened fire right into the tents where the cavalrymen were asleep. The sentry on duty at one of the loopholes shot the ringleader of the marauders. This checked their advance, but they threw themselves on the ground and opened on the camp. They riddled the tents with holes and would have wiped out our whole cavalry outfit if their fire had been a few feet lower. As soon as the shooting commenced the troopers rolled out of their cots, crawled into the trench we had dug, and then drove the attacking party off.

Well, after that there was nothin' much doing in the fightin' line and it looked as though we might be parked on the border for a year or two. So most of the married lads started sending for their wives. I even started to

figure up my slim financial assets, but I couldn't quite see how I could stretch my government pay so it would enable me to support a wife the way I figured a wife should be kept.

Hot! It was hotter down there on the Rio Grande than anything I'd ever seen in the Philippines.

"Does it ever rain down here?" I asked one day.

"Nope," a Texan told me. "You'll never be bothered by any water droppin' on you in this neck of the woods."

So our officers never made any preparations for emergency drainage. Then one evening it started to rain. And how she did rain! It was comin' down in sheets when we went to bed, and as our permanent camp wasn't quite finished we were living in tents with our cots right on the ground. During the night that Texas deluge turned into a cloudburst, and along about two A. M. when we were waked up we found water lappin' around our cots, right up to the edge of the beddin'. Everything from shoes and socks to live rattlesnakes was floatin' by. It looked as though the whole camp was going to be washed into the Rio Grande. We all made a rush to salvage our belongings and piled 'em on the cots. Then we started right in diggin' a ditch. You should've seen the gang when dawn broke the next morning. We were the soggiest-lookin' military outfit I ever laid eyes on.

I still preferred shootin' to any other form of recreation, and we found there were a lot of deer through this section along the Mexican border. Apparently my eye was as good as ever because in the regimental shoot

during the second summer on the border I hung up the best score in my company and the third best in the regiment.

"Well, Sam," one of the boys laughed after the scores from the regimental shoot were announced, "you better save that huntin' eye of yours till Uncle Sam joins the big show over in Europe."

We all roared at that. It was 1915 then, and the war in Europe seemed as far off as though it were on the moon. Villa and Carranza and their ruffians across the Rio Grande seemed a lot more important to us than any armies mixed up in a shindig five thousand miles away.

Deer huntin' on the Mexican border was a lot less thrilling than trailin' bear and moose in Alaska. But it was a lot of fun at that. One time three of us went out on a hunt and took along a team of horses with a wagon load of supplies. All of a sudden a dark, funnel-shaped cloud appeared, and a few minutes later we were dodgin' the biggest hailstones I ever saw. And the longer they fell the bigger they got. One the size of a hen's egg popped the off side horse on the nose and the team started to run away. We huddled under a bush, hoping it would protect us, but if one of those big white babies had popped us on the dome it would have been just too bad. After the storm was over we picked up a few here and there on the ground that were as big as my two fists. One of these heavy hailstones hit a rifle stock and put a big dent in it.

Another time when a couple of us were out after

deer we heard a funny crunchin' noise. Creepin' toward it, we discovered a drove of wild hogs, and I managed to pick off three of them before they got away. But it was the rattlesnakes that kept our huntin' trips from bein' too tame.

I remember once when I was out with several officers, including Colonel Crane, the regimental commander of the Ninth Infantry, and Lieutenant Lewis. Lewis was a hefty chap who tipped the beam at over two hundred and twenty-five pounds. Right up ahead of us was a little knoll, and as we drove closer a pair of antlers rose over the crest and a fine big buck came into point-blank range. Lieutenant Lewis, who was in front, started to pull a bead on the buck with his automatic rifle. Just as he did so there was a buzzing noise at his feet. When he glanced down he saw a seven foot rattler curled up ready to strike.

Lieutenant Lewis had been tellin' us how badly he needed exercise. You should've seen him get it. I'll bet no two hundred and twenty-five pounds of human beef on the hoof ever moved so fast before in the history of the State of Texas. All in one motion he whirled round, aimed, and blew the head off that snake. And when you consider that Mr. Rattler was ready to strike you'll agree with me it was pretty fast work for a fat man.

Of course, we always wore high leather boots or leggings when we went scouting in that region. But even they are not enough for complete protection. When a big Texas rattler strikes the chances are five to one

that he will give such a tremendous spring that he will strike you around the waist instead of below the knee.

On another jaunt through the mesquite I had my eye on a herd of deer one day and nearly walked right on top of the biggest rattler I ever saw. The moment he rattled I instinctively leaped sideways without stoppin' to see where he was. And that was one time when I was saved by a split second. The snake whizzed past me through the air like a streak of chain lightnin'. He gave such a tremendous spring that he landed six feet beyond where he had been lyin' in ambush. But before he had time to coil up and do it over again I drew a bead on him and blasted his head off clean.

Instead of spending our Sunday afternoons strolling in a park, we used to spend 'em rounding up rattlesnakes. Down in that Rio Grande country you find a lot of what we call pack rats. These curious creatures go around gathering up sticks and leaves and rags and even tin cans. Then they build mounds with them. Sometimes you run across a pack-rat mound that is over three feet high. The rats burrow out their living quarters in the bottom of the mound and then settle down to take it easy for the winter.

Along about that time here comes Mr. Rattlesnake. He spots this nice cozy nest and proceeds to crawl in without waiting for an invitation. But the rats refuse to vacate. Having built up their home, they insist on stayin' right there, snakes or no snakes. So both rats and rattlers declare a sort of armistice and live there together. It is a rather one-sided arrangement, however,

Hunting along the Rio Grande.

because whenever a rattlesnake gets hungry he picks out a nice fat rat and proceeds to have a banquet. Aside from that, everything is peace and brotherly love.

When a real sharp cold spell happens to come along the rat has his innings. You see, a freezing temperature will numb and temporarily deaden the rattlesnake. Then the rats get busy and have a banquet of their own. I have found snakes in those mounds with every rattle chewed off.

Well, we used to go huntin' these rat-and-rattlesnake apartment houses. Each man would have a stick from six to ten feet in length. Two or three of us would shove our poles under a mound and heave it right over. Out would scurry the rattlers, and then the clubbin' would begin. It wasn't uncommon for us to kill forty or fifty rattlers in a day. Usually we found the snakes in pairs, and occasionally we would uncover a bull snake from eight to ten feet long and as thick as my arm. You wouldn't exactly call them pleasant to look at, but they were not venomous.

The rattlers are a shade smaller. The largest I ever found in any of those rat mounds was a six-footer. But that's plenty big enough, because a rattlesnake that size can shoot so much poison into you at one bite that it will kill you before you have moved fifty yards.

I recall one time on the march when a detachment of us had stopped at an adobe shack. A little Mexican boy had just gone out to pick up a scythe. As he bent over a big rattler struck at him, and the lad dropped dead before he could get to the house.

Luckily for us the biggest rattlers, the ones that sometimes measured as long as eight feet, steered clear of our camps. It was the little ones that were most sociable. Yes, and when we were sleeping in tents we were mighty careful about slippin' into our shoes when we got up in the morning because it was not at all unusual to find a baby rattler curled up there for a snooze.

The biggest one I ever saw in camp was around three feet long. He was heading for the supply tent. I happened to be about due to go back East on a furlough and I knew the folks at home had never seen a rattlesnake. So I just caught this chap with a forked stick, picked him up by the back of the head, put him in a box, and carried him along home in my baggage. But I'm right here to tell you that playing escort to a live rattler on a thousand-mile journey isn't the sort of work I'd choose as a regular thing. This rattler didn't turn out to be a very friendly companion. So when I got home I put him in a jar of alcohol and pickled him.

My first intimate acquaintance with snakes dated back to the old days in the Philippines. Out there I used to spend a lot of my spare time collecting all varieties to show the folks in Indiana. Some were big fellows and some only about six inches long. I used to pickle 'em in *vino,* and when I saw what it did to 'em I wasn't surprised that taking too much of that Filipino beverage would make a man run amuck. But my big snake jar got cracked and I never did bring those snakes back from the Islands.

After Sergeant Weiler and I killed rattlesnakes and

chased deer and wild hogs all over that end of Texas we decided to have some fun on the side, and get rich at the same time. So we rounded up enough lumber to build a shack. In front of it we hung out a sign announcing that we were "Photographers De Luxe." You see, every rookie who came down to the Mexican border either wanted to have a picture of himself leaning against a bunch of cactus or mounted on a Mexican jackass. So we took advantage of this situation and gave 'em all the fancy scenery they wanted for backgrounds. We made our prices fifty per cent. cheaper than anybody else on the Rio Grande and for two bits you could have your fotygraff hand colored. I shot 'em and Weiler manipulated the paint brush. Well, the rookies began turning up in droves. We had all the business we could handle in our off-duty time, and we were sittin' up late o' nights figurin' out how soon we'd be able to retire on the loot. Then one day our bubble was punctured and word came that Uncle Sam had decided to take a hand in the World War. So we said good-bye to the cactus, the rattlesnakes, the greasers, and the Rio Grande.

"Weiler," I said to my partner, when I heard about the declaration of war, "I've been practicing shooting all my life, and now it looks as though I'll have plenty of chance to try out my marksmanship on the sort of targets that we soldiers are supposed to be ready for."

"Hell's bells," he fired back, "just what good is your damn rifle going to be in this man's war? It looks to me as though the whole stunt in France is machine guns,

poison gas, and artillery. From what I hear, your rifle will be as out of date as a bow and arrow, and I wouldn't be surprised if you went through the war without even seeing anything to shoot at."

"Buddy," said I, "the rifle is one weapon that's never going to be out of date. Where there's a war there's going to be rifle shooting."

And I said that cocky and downright, but I wasn't so sure about it myself. Mebbe when I got across to France, if my luck held out that long, I'd find the rifle out of date, and my marksmanship, of which I was so proud, no use at all. Even if I had qualified as a hunter and stalker of game, just what chance was there of such primitive qualifications getting me anywhere in this modern, mechanical World War? I didn't know. I could only hope it would, and I kept on thinking about it as the months of training reeled by.

CHAPTER XV

ON THE WAY TO CAPTURE THE KAISER

He Shut His Eyes, Blazed Away, and Almost Killed the Top Sergeant—Gun-shy Johnnie Pulcino—We Sail for France, and Have a Brush with a U-boat.

ALL of us old rookies had visions of being rushed to the firing line with orders to break through, push on to Berlin, and capture the Kaiser. We figured they'd shoot us across on the next boat. But we guessed wrong. Instead of sending us to war they sent us to school, to learn how to be soldiers, I guess. As a matter of fact, they needed officers and, although we were typical old-time non-coms of the regulation buck private breed, they shot us over to San Antonio for a couple of months' training and then gave us temporary commissions.

My appointment as a "Second Looey" came from Washington. Most of the top sergeants in our crowd blossomed forth as captains. And those old-timers were qualified for it, too, I'll tell the world. They had been as good as captains for years, because during the frequent absences of their company commanders they had always run the outfit. To show you how fast some of the boys shot up in rank with the declaration of war, the last I heard of our old regimental supply sergeant,

Harry Blum, he was a full colonel, decked out with silver eagles on his shoulders, and slappin' major generals on the back. Harry, up to that time, had served eighteen years in the old Ninth Infantry.

There was one thing about this officer business, though, that bothered me. Where was my old rifle going to come in, and what good was my marksmanship now? If rifle shooting was out of date for a private, it never had been in date for an officer. I began to figure that as far as soldiering was concerned it would have been almost as well if I'd never paid much attention to sharpshooting. But it's funny, isn't it, how things turn out. Bringing down a caribou from a mile off or breaking a bear's neck with the first shot turned out to be just the right sort of preliminary to the stalking and hunting that was to come my way pretty soon.

I was in hopes they'd order me back to the Ninth. Everybody who ever served in that regiment wanted to stick with it. You see, the Ninth dated to Revolutionary War days, when it helped George Washington. It had been disbanded six times but always reorganized. Wherever there was a fight, there you'd find the Ninth. It took part in the War of 1812. My dad had fought alongside it in storming Mexico City in the days when it was commanded by General Pierce, who afterward became President of the United States. It was sent out to California in the days of '49 to protect the miners from bein' scalped by the Indians. Then it came back and played an important part in the Civil War. Ten of its officers dropped out to join the Confederates, and

one of them, by the way, was Pickett, the stout fellow who led that immortal "Pickett's charge" at Gettysburg.

When Uncle Sam startled our forbears by purchasing Alaska from the Russians and going into the refrigerator business back in 1867, a part of the old Ninth was sent up there. Another part was sent to play a rôle in the Indian wars on our frontier. When San Juan Hill was stormed in Cuba the Ninth was Johnny-on-the-spot, and when the Moros tore loose in the Philippines the old Ninth was sent to try and break 'em of their head-huntin' habits. Later on it went up to China to do a few rounds with the Boxers, and when I went out to the Philippines to serve my first hitch I found it there. That old regiment had so much history and tradition behind it, no wonder we all wanted to go back to it.

But as everybody knows, Uncle Sam was caught with nothin' but a skeleton of an army when he decided to take a hand in lickin' the Kaiser. So they had to take men from the old regular regiments to build up the new organizations. Orders came for me to go from San Antonio to Syracuse, New York, and then in a short time I was shifted down to Gettysburg. My new outfit was Company M of the Sixteenth Infantry, under Captain George E. Ventress. He wasn't with us long until they rushed him overseas with the advance party of the Fifth Division and I was made acting captain to finish organizing the company and then take it to Camp Greene, North Carolina, in the autumn of 1917. That motley crowd of rookies certainly did need organizin',

too. They came from all over the country, but mainly from Pennsylvania and New York. A lot of them were Pennsylvania coal miners, mostly volunteers, too. Husky, big-hearted, natural-born fightin' men, ready for anything. They had spent their lives underground, on the business end of picks and shovels. So they had brawn to burn. They all knew which end of a rifle the bullet came out of and which end to shove against your shoulder. But beyond that they didn't know nothin' about firearms. So they came near bein' the rookiest bunch of rookies in this man's army, and the rookiest of the lot was a wop from the anthracite country, a heavy-set, dark-skinned bird named Giovanni Pulcino.

Pulcino hadn't been over from sunny Italy long. Maybe he didn't know what it was all about. But that didn't make any difference because he was willing to be a soldier. But somehow he just couldn't. Giovanni Pulcino was the most gun-shy human I ever saw. One day we were out on the range, shootin' at two hundred yards. It wasn't only that he missed the bull's-eye every time; but he never even hit within six feet of the target!

"What'sa da matter wit you, Pulcino?" I bellowed at him in disgust.

"No getta da bullet straight," he answered.

He tried it over and over and I watched him carefully to see what was wrong. He would level his rifle, aim with great care, then shut his eyes, pull the trigger and give a jerk that would send the bullet into the ground ten feet in front of him. I was amazed, because I didn't think it possible for anybody to shoot so bad, and I

Woodfill and some of his men, most of whom fell in the Argonne. Seated second from the left and fifth from the left are his two pals, Sergeant Hans Nelson and Lieutenant Sam Gowler.

bawled him out to a fare-you-well. He listened respectfully, saluted, took aim again, shut his eyes—and almost killed the top sergeant.

The other birds in that company of mine guyed old Johnnie Pulcino without mercy.

"Come on, John, getta da rifle and try to shoota da ten-acre field!" "Looka out, or you'll shoota yourself, Macaroni." "Aw, hell, he's tryin' to put one over on us —that wop's just afraid."

The fellow who made that last remark thought a cyclone straight from Sicily had hit him. Johnnie dropped his rifle and made a rush.

"You speak da beega lie. I show you. I fighta you weeth da feest."

I was convinced at last. That boy was no coward. But we were simply wastin' our time tryin' to teach Giovanni Pulcino to shoot.

"Guess I'll try him out as my orderly," I said to Swede Nelson, my big top sergeant.

And Johnnie Pulcino made the finest "striker" I ever saw. He was as faithful as an old dog and as good-natured as they come. I soon grew very much attached to Johnnie.

"Goin' to take out any government insurance?" I asked him one day.

"No use, *Tenènte,*" he told me, "I gotta no family. Gotta no relations atall. Nobody care."

"See to it that the boys soft pedal their guying," I said to Nelson. "This wop is doing the best he can. He's a real fellow."

And the sergeant did. That top sergeant of mine was just about the best top sergeant in this man's army. Severt J. Nelson was his name on the company roll. But in a short time everybody got to callin' him Hans. He was born in Sweden, but had lost his old-country accent in twenty-seven years of soldiering in the United States army. He was a model soldier, six foot two in his stockings, as brawny as an old Norse Viking, quick-witted and efficient—the finest type of old regular I ever saw.

"Hans, why don't you let me recommend you for an officers' training school?" I asked him, much as I hated losing him.

"Not for me!" he replied. "I wouldn't know what to do with a commission if I had one. I figure I was born to be a top sergeant. I've learned the game. And I'm goin' to stick to it. I'd rather be a top sarge than a brigadier."

I had a mighty fine second lieutenant under me, also. He was a civilian and had been a school-teacher at Valparaiso, Indiana. Before he went to the officers' training school at Camp Benjamin Harrison in Indianapolis he didn't know straight up about war. His name was Sam Gowler, and Sam was the quickest man on his feet and with his wits that I ever saw. For myself, I had to learn things by havin' 'em drilled and hammered into my skull. But Sam could take a book of military tactics, read it over once, and then go right out on the field and execute it as though he were the man who had originated the maneuver.

Anyhow, I had a great gang. And after a few months' training those rookies began to know their oats. They weren't strangers to me any more, and I discovered what each man could do and what he couldn't. I recall one little chap, a slender, pink-cheeked little shaver who always threw himself enthusiastically into everything.

"How old are you, Ritchey?" I asked him one day.

"A-ah-ah—eighteen," he stuttered.

I didn't argue with him about it. I remember how I felt when the recruitin' officer turned me down because I was too young. If this kid was smart enough to get into the army and slip by the examiners I wasn't goin' to doubt his word.

Then to add a bit of spice to my aggregation they gave me five redskins. One was an Apache by the name of Gonzales Acuna, a tall, strappin' fellow with a profile like the Indian on the nickel. Two of the others always traveled together. Yazza was short and stocky. Ayala was lean and quick. Their names were such a mouthful that we all just dubbed 'em Yazo and Yalo for short.

Well, in November we all went down to North Carolina and stayed there for the winter, filling up our outfits to war strength and training them for overseas. We figured that our sailin' orders would come along most any time now. So on Christmas I took a step that I had been contemplating for a long time. You see, I'd been engaged ever since my return from Alaska, and now, with my bigger income, I felt I was able to afford the luxury of matrimony at last. So I got ten days' leave, hurried home, and the day after Christmas I assumed

the responsibilities of a married man—by saying goodbye to my wife and going off to war.

Giovanni Pulcino was the first man to congratulate me when I turned up at Camp Greene.

"I geeva your lady da wedding present," said Johnnie, "but it's in Italy. You see, my father he die and leava me a lotta da jewelry. I hava da silver chain five feet long that go three times around da neck. My father he maka him from da silver nugget dat he deeg up in old chest. After we finish da beeg fight, you bet I go back to Italy and getta da chain."

Nothing much happened at Camp Greene during that winter except that while I was acting as captain my first lieutenant's commission came along.

In April of 1918 they sent us up to Hoboken. There they kept us so busy with inspection and assembling of equipment that I never even got a look at New York until I saw the sky line and waved to Miss Liberty as we steamed down the river bound for the big fight. They shipped us off on the S. S. *Philadelphia*. Of course, we had heard a lot about submarines and they ran us ragged doing lookout stunts of all sorts on the way across. At every eight feet around the deck they put a soldier to keep his eyes scanning the sea. Up in the crow's nest the sailors did the same. Fore and aft were the big guns, manned by naval gunners and ready for action if a conning tower happened to bob in sight. Afterward I learned that the month we crossed was the month when the German U-boats were trying their hardest to wipe Allied shipping off the seven seas. And we had to pass

right through the worst danger zone of all, the Bay of Biscay.

If any of the soldiers were worryin' over the prospects of goin' down to call on Davy Jones, you couldn't tell it. They sprawled over every square foot of deck, baskin' in the glorious sunshine. With no lights allowed at night—not even cigarettes or lighted matches—we had to make the best of the day. A dozen poker games were goin' full blast in quiet corners, craps were rattling on the deck, and I. O. U.'s were moving from pocket to pocket. Serious-minded buck privates were learning French in ten lessons, and up ahead our ship's glee club was yodeling plaintive ditties about Mademoiselle from Armentières and other French maidens whom they looked forward to meeting.

We were three days out from Liverpool. The Sixtieth and Sixty-first infantries crowded the transport *Philadelphia* from top deck to hold. In all, there were thirteen ships in our convoy, and they steamed along on both sides of us in diamond formation. Torpedo boats and a cruiser bristling with guns guarded our flanks. A "mosquito fleet" of Yankee sub chasers and destroyers circled and buzzed around us as we zigzagged our way through the danger zone.

"Periscope two points to starboard!" sang out a man in the crow's nest.

A German U-boat had poked up its asparagus right in the middle of our convoy. The gun crews jumped to their stations. Poker, craps, and the Mademoiselle from Armentières were all forgotten in the rush for the rail.

A British destroyer dashed to the spot to ram the visitor just as the U-boat dived. The ships in the convoy broke formation, and the mosquito fleet began cuttin' figure eights and droppin' noisy depth bombs over the place where the periscope was last seen. "Ash cans" were poppin' into the Atlantic like hailstones into a mud puddle. Every one of us on the *Philadelphia* was cock-eyed with excitement.

"Atta boy, give 'im another ash can!"

"Sock 'im again!"

The roar of the depth bombs continued for ten minutes or so. Then it stopped. A mass of oil and wreckage had come to the surface of the ocean.

"U-boat destroyed," the submarine chasers signaled. One of the ash cans had hit the mark, all right. The Kaiser's U-104 had gone to the bottom. Our naval people were certain of it at the time, and after the war the date of its vanishing was confirmed.

After all that excitement on the high seas, the three days before we reached Liverpool were like three years to the boys. They had had their first taste of war, and were r'arin' for more. "Why did the blankety blank transport take so long to get across?" "What won't we do to those lousy Dutchmen when we get at 'em!" "When do we get to France?" The whole Sixtieth Infantry was ready to jump off the transport and swim to get a quicker start—destination Berlin. And God help the fellow that tries to stop us. That was the sentiment on the good ship *Philadelphia* as we steamed into Liverpool.

They hustled us from transport to a funny-looking English train with side doors, and then whirled us across the island to a city called Winchester. Since then I've heard tell that there was a famous cathedral there. Maybe so, and maybe I saw it. But I don't remember. Three or four days at Winchester and off we went to Southampton for a jaunt across the Channel. And was it rough? I'll say it was! On our way across the English Channel you didn't hear any of the boys makin' wise-cracks about what they were going to do to the Kaiser. Most of them just wished they'd never been born or that a U-boat would come up and torpedo us and get us out of our misery.

Next morning in fog and rain we pulled into the dock at Havre, where side-door pullmans were waitin' to take us to the front to chase the Germans back to Berlin.

CHAPTER XVI

ACROSS FRANCE TO THE FRONT

It Was Our First Meal Behind the Lines—Beef Stew from the Cook and TNT from Fritz—Our Two Indians Who Fell in Love with Mlle Cognac—The Tale of the Doughboy Who Threw Hand Grenades at Himself—A Midnight Raid with Flame Throwers.

ALL I can remember of my first trip in France was that we rode all day and it rained all night, and then we rolled out of our side-door pullmans at a place called Champignol—our first training ground in Europe. On our way down from Havre they shot us right through Paris, but none of us even knew it until afterward. Nor was it until the war was over that I got a look at Gay Paree.

After a lot of maneuvers and instructions in front-line tactics at Champignol they gave us marching orders to start for the front. We did this in short laps of a few kilometers at a time. We'd hike a day and then stop at another training ground for a few days' workout. Finally we wound up at a little French farm right near the lines in the Anould sector. There were some Boche sausage observation balloons hanging in the air near here, so we tried to conceal ourselves behind the farmhouse and barn.

There was a French artillery outfit on the way up, and the Germans must have spotted it. In the meantime, our chief interest in life was the hot beef stew and fried potatoes that Buhnke, our mess sergeant, was dishing out. Buhnke was a round-faced, roly-poly, cheery Pennsylvania Dutchman. No matter what happened, it never upset his chronic good nature. That's why I'd picked him for the job.

"Make it snappy, you guys," he bellowed at the men as they filed up with their mess kits. "This ain't no all-night barbecue, and if you birds want to get in on the buffet supper you'd better hop to it while the goin's good. Those Heinies up ahead are liable to ruin your appetite any minute."

Just then there was a roar in the distance and something went screeching over our heads like a trolley car taking a curve on two wheels. Then all of a sudden one corner of the field just behind us went up in the air with a noise like a clap of thunder and then settled down all over the surroundin' scenery. The Germans in that sausage had caught sight of the French artillery all right, and as a result we were now having our first real taste of the Great War.

Mess kits flew in all directions. There was a dugout at the corner of the farmhouse, and a dozen brave American soldiers on their way to Berlin did a nose dive detour down that hole like scared woodchucks. Eight bold buck privates went into a huddle under the table where the cook was ladling out the stew and coffee, and over went table, stew, and the whole works.

"Ouch, ouch," bellowed a rookie. "I'm hit! My eye's gone!"

"Aw, nix on the bellyaching," was all the sympathy he got from his buddy. "Use your other eye, and get off my leg!"

I guess a splash of hot coffee had gone into this lad's face. But before he let out another yelp there was a second roar, another terrifying screech overhead, followed by another cloud of dirt going skyward. At any rate, they didn't happen to have our range and I was sure it was the French artillery they were after. So I went on eating, although the fried potatoes sort of stuck in my throat. The two lieutenants sitting near me were apparently waiting to see what I intended to do. It was up to me to appear calm, whether I was or not. So I just took another spoonful of stew.

The shells began falling a bit nearer now. They were shortening up on the range. One burst in the road right near by, and when the smoke cleared there was a Frenchman writhing with a leg bashed clean off. Another shell plumped in the road. The fragments barely missed the horses that were draggin' an eight-inch gun. The horses lunged and both team and gun went rollin' end over end down the embankment. As the gun crew started down to the rescue I shouted to those of my men who were still out in the open:

"Who'll volunteer to help me haul that gun back up the embankment?"

"I."

"Here."

"Me, too."

"I'll go."

Every man in sight responded. The others would have come, too, but they had sought shelter, which was only human. If I'da been a buck private I probably would've been the first man to dive into that dugout. Anyhow, we all had a hunch that the sooner we assisted the Frenchies to get on down the road and out of our neighborhood the sooner the Germans would allow us to finish our first meal near the front without seasoning our stew with any more lead and steel. So we hustled out some ropes, turned the gun right side up, and boosted it up the embankment. Meanwhile plenty of shells were coming over. And I guess the only thing that saved us was that so many of their messages of hate were duds. Out of thirty or forty that plumped down all around us, only seven exploded.

Anyhow, we got the gun back on the road. One of the Frogs was having a bit of trouble up by the horses' heads, so I went up to give him a hand. Right over our heads was a good-sized tree. There was another roar off to the east, another screech overhead. Something was tearin' down through the branches. It struck with a plunk right between me and the French artilleryman. It was a German .77, and it completely buried itself in the mud. The horses r'ared back and that gun carriage missed doing another loop-the-loop down the embankment by an inch or two. But the shell just lay there—and didn't go off.

"Mon Dieu," said the Frenchman.

I was too startled to even say that much. Anyway, when my wits collected themselves, the thought occurred to me that if the Boche were going to buzz over shells with my name written on 'em it was mighty thoughtful of 'em to send duds. Nor was it the last dud that fanned me during the war. If all the German shells that fell within six feet of me from that day on until the Armistice had exploded, I'd be a freckle-faced angel, wearin' snowy wings and singin' bass in the celestial choir by this time.

Mebbe some of the Germans could say the same about our Yankee shells. In one of the artillery outfits backing us up a little later on they nearly razzed a certain greenhorn officer until he was loony because of something he didn't know about modern warfare. This half-baked shavetail had been firing a big gun into the German lines for three hours before he woke up to the fact that it was a good idea to fuse his shells in order to make 'em explode.

Captain Ventress, who had preceded us to France to get experience, came down and took over command of the company from me in the Anould sector. This was in the Vosges Mountains, a supposedly quiet sector, where you might almost say that the Germans and French were on friendly and even cordial terms. You see, there had been a lot of heavy fighting in that sector right at the beginning of the war. The Germans had flooded it with troops, but it never developed into an important battle zone. Germans, French, and later Americans, all used it as one of their chief training grounds. And it was

evident they had a sort of mutual friendly agreement not to worry the other fellow too much.

But when things would get too quiet, occasionally some young Napoleon would play a practical joke by undertaking a raid through the wire and attacking a strong point. Or the artillerymen on one side or the other would wake up and spray the boys over the way with a few shells just to remind 'em that there was a war still goin' on. Usually this sort of thing would only last a few hours and then the boys would do nothing but gaze at the scenery for a while. The scenery wasn't half bad, either. The sector, down on the edge of Alsace, had some of the highest peaks of the Vosges Mountains, and from the tops of some of them you could see way over the Rhine.

The Sixty-Fourth French Territorials were up there at the same time we were. They had nearly a four-year start on us at this war business and were sent along to show us a few fine points of the game. Just to give you an idea of how inactive that sector really was, both sides had held their position so long that vines and bushes had grown completely over their batteries and observation posts. It wasn't even necessary to resort to camouflage. They also had fairly comfortable concrete-lined trenches and concrete dugouts that were almost as durable as the walls of a great fortress.

Hans Nelson and I made the first inspection of the front line, along with an officer and sergeant from a neighboring company, and a young chap named Devine, who was from our outfit and spoke French. Of course, I

put in some of my spare moments pluggin' away at one of those books on *How to Speak French in Six Lessons,* but somehow I didn't seem to get far. At any rate, when I attempted to pull some of my book French the people would look blank and I'd have to call on someone else to do my parleyvooing.

"Me speaka da French, too," said Johnnie Pulcino. Although he was still gun-shy, that striker of mine was turning out to be a mighty useful man.

We stayed up at a French strong point and bunked in the dugouts with the Frogs—and the numerous other small but rather unpleasant occupants—for five days. From time to time our hosts would take us out to show us the surroundings. Sometimes it would be a trip through the trenches. Then again they would take us to the loftiest lookout point to study the German positions with high-powered binoculars. When we looked through the glasses we discovered that the Germans were bringing up supplies.

"Well, why don't you Frenchmen give 'em a jolt or two to scare 'em a bit?" Nelson asked. He was always itchin' for a fight. Just as he said this somebody in a near-by battery must have had the same inspiration because a French gun opened up from under a lot of vines only a few feet away, close enough to shake our eyeteeth. The shell landed in the German lines about three hundred yards off. Then a lot more were sent over. This must have irritated the Germans because then they got busy.

All of a sudden there was a clap of thunder, a terrific

jar, and it seemed as though the Day of Judgment had arrived. The French battery had been tryin' to drop a shell on the main German ammunition dump—and that's just what had happened. When the dump went off it looked as though all that part of Alsace was headed skyward.

"Well, Hans," said I, "all you have to do is express a wish and it comes true. How do you like it?"

The next day some Frenchmen led us by the hand, out into No Man's Land, through a gap they had sniped in their own barbed wire. We had to plop down on our hands and knees and wriggle in and out through wire and bushes like a lot of kids playin' Pussy Wants a Corner. We came upon an abandoned trench which we tumbled into, and our French guides pointed out a clump of bushes just a few rods away. "That's a German machine-gun nest," one of them whispered.

Hans pricked up his ears at this and before anyone could stop him he had leveled his gun and taken a pot shot right into the clump where the French said the Germans were. But a moment later, Whang! and the Heinies replied. What's more, they gave back better than we'd sent. A shrapnel shell from a trench mortar came tumblin' over and burst within six feet of our little scoutin' party. Luckily it was a dud. The cap just blew off gently and the bullets sprayed out as though a child were tossin' 'em.

One of the French officers had picked up a bit of American slang and he shouted to us: "Beat it! The next one might tear your can off."

We were beginning to have a low opinion of German ammunition. Nevertheless, instinct told us that a defective shell isn't a thing you can ever bank on.

"You seem to be full of fight, Sergeant Nelson," spoke up our interpreter, Devine. "I guess you'd like to go out with some of these black French troops. They'd put on a party that would suit you perfectly." He was referring to the Algerian and Senegalese soldiers, the chaps who liked to bring back souvenirs as visible evidence of what they had accomplished. A lot of them were serving down here in the Vosges, and whenever that sector got too quiet they would just sneak over to some German outpost during the night, slit a sentry's throat, cut off his ears, or mebbe his whole head, and carry it around with them for a few days. They would keep their souvenirs until the news got to their higher-up French officers' ears—or noses. But if the French tried to make them give up their little keepsakes, that would only make them all the more determined to sneak out for a new supply of trophies at the first chance.

"You and your outfit are occupying the barracks the Senegalese just vacated," spoke up one of the French officers.

"Vacated! Like hell they're vacant!" remarked Nelson with a wry grin, as he scratched himself.

While Sergeant Hans and I were on this preliminary Cook's Tour of the French outposts, the rest of the boys were on tour in the nearest French village. I don't remember the name of the place because at that time the names of most French villages sounded just alike to

A "buffet luncheon" after a "party" with Heinie during the Meuse-Argonne drive.

A few of the "brass hats" under whom Woodfill served during the St. Mihiel drive—General McMahon, commander of the Fifth Division, and his staff.

me. My ear for French wasn't sufficiently attuned to tell one name from another. At any rate, that village had an *estaminet* and soon became a bit too popular with our lads. When we got in from our scouting jaunt we found that some of them had been hittin' the cognac trail. From all appearances, Yazo and Yalo were a lap or two ahead of the rest of the boys. Those two redskins weren't long in making up their minds that France was "the happy huntin' ground" they had long dreamed of. They probably never heard of Sherman's sentiments on war, but if they had they'd figured he was talkin' through his hat. Home, out on their reservation, was never anything like this, and they were for it.

Well, I let 'em get boiled a few times without saying much. But their jags began to lengthen out, and about the third time they were A. W. O. L. for three days at a stretch I decided I'd have to do something for the morale of the whole company or our military invasion of the Vosges would degenerate into a drinking bout. I met 'em staggerin' in, plastered as owls.

"Where yuh been?" I demanded in my sternest voice.

"Oh, hic, jus' walkin' round seein' Fransh. Jus' walkin' around."

"Just walking around, eh? Well, suppose you keep right on walkin' around some more. But to keep your hands and elbows out of mischief we'll find something for you to carry."

There was a big hefty timber behind company head-

quarters. Two men could just about manage it without having any strength left over. So I stood Yazo at one end of it and Yalo at the other and made them hoist it to their shoulders.

"Now carry that up and down the main street of this Frog village till I tell you to stop."

Just to make sure they didn't drop that timber and spend any more time in the local *estaminet,* I posted a sentry to see that they kept on the job. It happened the sentry had just lost his month's salary to Yazo at a little game of stud poker. I figured he would enjoy this duty, and he did. Well, those two redskins started up and down with that log. Back and forth, back and forth they moseyed with the whole darn French population out watchin' 'em and wonderin' what "the crazy Americans" were up to now. Even the rest of the boys in our company stopped chasin' "seam squirrels" in their undershirts in order to come out and razz Yalo and Yazo. In about an hour and a half the two Indians began to crumple under the load.

"Come on there, keep movin'," bellers the sentry, "or you'll get a sock on the beezer. Hep! Hep!"

Yazo and Yalo carried that log three hours before I let 'em off. And you can bet your last *centime* they never went A. W. O. L. again. They really were tiptop lads and I liked them a lot. They were not a bit like an Indian sergeant in our neighboring outfit, Company G, who drew his pistol and bumped off another sergeant one day in an argument. That took place just before we went into action in the St. Mihiel drive, so instead of

court-martial and a firing squad, his officers just took him along into battle. He wasn't tried till after the war.

After a few days they sent us all up to the front lines and the whole regiment was split into platoons, with each platoon assigned to hold a strong point. There wasn't much active warfare going on, but each side sent out raidin' parties to put on little shows so as to break in raw troops.

One of our sentries spent a lonesome night in an outpost with nothin' to do except stalk cooties. But along about three A. M. he heard some suspicious sounds out in front. The chills went down his spinal column, and grabbin' a hand grenade he threw it out over the top of the trench. But in his hurry he forgot all about the almost solid mass of wire netting that the French had strung along the top of the trench. That darn grenade of his hit the wire, and without his knowing it the grenade bounced right back over his head to the rear of the trench and went off behind him.

"Come on, you lousy Dutchmen," he yelled. "I can lick your whole blankety blank army."

Whereupon he grabbed a half dozen more grenades and let 'em fly. They, of course, rebounded and began explodin' all over the place. That poor rookie thought he was in the midst of a fierce assault, and kept on throwin' hand grenades as fast as he could pick 'em up. The only thing that saved him from wasting the whole stack of ammunition was when one of the bombs went off so close to him that it knocked him out.

Another chap in our outfit was driven from his out-

post by a party of German midnight prowlers. They chased him out with hand grenades and machine-gun fire. It was a real show this time, however. Corporal Charles Rounds was this chap's name. He was a cool bird, too. After the grenades stopped explodin' he returned from around a bend in the communication trench where he had fled, spit on his shoes for luck, and crawled right in under their machine-gun fire, which was a bit high. Then he opened up with his automatic rifle and drove off the entire raiding party.

That lad, Charley Rounds, was a fighter from away back. He took another wallop at the Germans during the Argonne fracas. He got curious concerning the location of some German machine-gun nests and battery positions, so he just pushed off alone on a little reconnoiterin' jaunt. He discovered the positions he was lookin' for and crawled back to the lines to give the information to our gunners. Then our artillery blew 'em right off the map. Charley got the D. S. C. for that.

One day the Germans were feeling their oats a bit and framed up a raid on one of the strong points held by G Company. This particular position was right on the crest of a hill, and it consisted of two dugouts about twenty feet square covered over with two or three layers of logs and dirt, with a lot of sandbags on top of that. Circling around these dugouts, like a castle moat, were trenches deep enough for a man to stand in. Beyond the trenches was a larger circle of barbed wire. This particular bit of hilly country was covered with virgin forest and the French had made a belt of barbed wire seventy-

five feet broad between this strong point and the German lines. It was strung between the trees and bushes, fastened up on posts, and just draped around in loose coils. It was as thick as spaghetti on a wop's platter, and to look at it you wouldn't think Old Nick himself could ever sneak through.

Two of our sentries were on the lookout in one of the dugout gun booths. They had automatic rifles to the left of them and hand grenades to the right of them, ready for anything. Those automatic rifles work on the same principle as a machine gun, only they can be fired from the shoulder, and one of them will rip out four hundred bullets per minute, and that doesn't give you much time to dodge between bullets if you're on the receivin' end!

Well, the Germans picked out this strong point for the scene of their little midnight celebration. I have always had my suspicions as to what those sentries were doing. I have a hunch they were asleep. Anyway, they didn't give the alarm till the raiding party had got through all that wire right up to the third row from the sentry box. The Heinies could almost have reached over and grabbed the muzzles of the guns in our loopholes. Mebbe the sentries heard 'em earlier and decided to wait till the Germans got so close they could "see the whites of their eyes." But for green troops like those sentries happened to be, to have done that would have shown a bit too much poise and nerve.

When the alarm went off the men in the dugouts jumped to their positions and started pepperin' the

scenery with rifles and machine guns before they were half awake. It was blacker than the mill tails of Hades and they didn't have the vaguest notion where the Boche raiders were. They just took it for granted they were all around and started blazin' in all directions.

The Germans returned the greetings—with trimmings. They opened with machine-gun fire at the right, hand grenades and liquid fire at the left, and gas from the Lord knows where. Hell sure was poppin' in the Vosges Mountains that night. Then the nearest strong point joined in the fracas too, and gave the German prowlers a shower of bullets from the other flank. The G Company men discovered where the flame projector was—behind a big tree that had been shelled down. They made for the spot with a machine gun. Ping! Whish! and there were no more fiery bouquets comin' from any Germans in that vicinity. Our bullets had punctured the compression tanks of the apparatus and set the works off.

One of the Company G boys spun around with a bullet in his leg. His buddy took his place at the gun. A lot of groans came from the darkness out there in the wire. So the Germans were stoppin' a few bullets, too. When the second American strong point joined the shindig the Germans decided not to play any more. While their machine gunners kept up a steady fire the rest of the party beat a retreat and in a few minutes the whole business was over. Six of the lads from G Company had been killed, and twenty-four were gassed. Next morning when we went out to see what it was all about there

wasn't a dead German to be found. But there was plenty of booty. That German raiding party had been stocked up with enough hand grenades to wipe out our division. And there were so many stacks of potato-masher grenades lying round that a special detachment had to be sent out to carry 'em all in. The souvenir hunters had nearly enough German Luger pistols and rifles to go around.

That night orders came for me to relieve Company G and take over the position. Captain Ventress wasn't with us at the moment and I was in command of Company M. We got in and took over after dark, doubled sentries, and sent back for reënforcements and wire to repair the gap the German raiders had made. It came up next morning and we all got busy.

"Volunteers for repairing the wire," I sang out. A half dozen responded, and of these I picked three: "You, Sergeant Nelson; you, Sergeant Blackmore; and you, Private Smith."

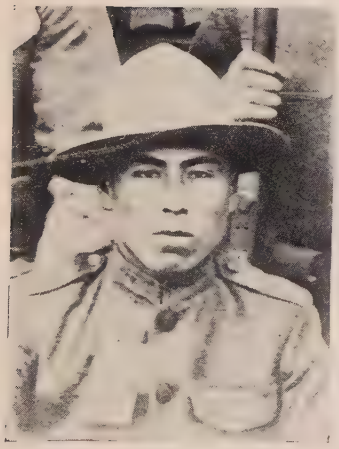
These three were old regulars. I figured for our first real rumpus it might be wiser to pick men who had been through the mill, who had made soldierin' their business. The Germans were sure to have their patrols and snipers keeping a sharp lookout on the gap in the wire they had made. So it was hardly a job for butter-fingered rookies.

"Keep close behind me, keep low, and keep your rifles down," I whispered.

Everything seemed as quiet and peaceful as the Garden of Eden before the Fall. It was one of those perfect

midsummer days in one of the loveliest parts of France. And when they have 'em perfect over there, they're just about as perfect as you'll ever find 'em this side of the Pearly Gates. Over in the east were the other ranges of the Vosges, with their slopes covered from base to crest with luxuriant green woods. The only sound that came to our ears was a sound as peaceful as though we were startin' on a huntin' trek in the Alaskan forest. It was the sound of men choppin' and sawin' wood over in the German lines. The sun was on full candlepower. That was just the trouble, too. It was a bit too bright for work like ours. But there was a lot of repairing to be done in that wire and it wouldn't do to leave it until night fall because the Heinies might come over in force, rush through the gap in the wire, and get revenge for the way they had been messed up on the previous night. They had done a tiptop piece of work as far as they got before their flame thrower went fut and they had to retreat. They had snipped a curvin' passage through the seventy-five foot barricade of wire that was six feet wide. And every inch of that six feet, clean through the entanglement, had been redded up as neatly as your front lawn on Saturday afternoon. I couldn't find any wire or shrubbery in that six-foot barbed-wire avenue, not even a piece the size of a lead pencil. We certainly doffed our tin kellys to the Heinies for their thoroughness. They had not taken any chances on a man betraying their movement toward us by crackin' twigs under his feet.

They also had cut another place away in the middle of



"Yazo" holding rifle, "Yalo," and Acuna. Those redskins found France a regular happy hunting ground, and I met them staggering in plastered as owls

the barbed-wire belt all the way round a big tree. They had made that island within a hundred feet of our gun booth. That's where their machine gunner had taken up his position, and we found a lot of empty shells all around.

"Keep your eye peeled for Boche snipers," I whispered to Nelson, before I struck out. Lying flat on my stomach, slithering back and forth like a mountain lion stalkin' its prey, I started to weave in new wire and close up that gap. For half an hour I worked steadily, and during that time I succeeded in finishing up one full spool of wire and had just started a second one. Still not a sound but the wood chopping over on the other side of No Man's Land. I figured the Heinies must be resting up after their night raid. By that time I had worked over a little crest and my three men were crawling along just behind.

Ping! Right past my ear like the crack of a whip! Machine-gun bullets. I pancaked on the ground. Rat-a-tat-tat, rat-a-tat-tat, they went zipping over my back. No place for a fat man. If I'd measured six inches thicker around the waist that gunner would have put creases in my undershirt. The dirt and rock began to fly. Barbed wire started snapping into pieces. Then he must have pulled down on his gun because the bullets began hitting hardly two feet in front of me. So I didn't move a hair. And in a few minutes the gunner either lost sight of me or I had given what he considered a perfect imitation of a dead soldier. He ceased operations; I began them. You should've seen me slide away from that

place. I pushed backward over the crest of the hill and down to where the rest of the boys were lying.

"Come on, let's sneak around to the other side of this knoll," I whispered. "Mebbe we can get in a bit of work there."

The way things were only one man could do any wiring at a time. I hauled it after me and started in again. But I just started and that was all. Crack! Crack! Crack! Those German machine gunners certainly were on their job. This time they were after me from a little hill across the creek about three hundred yards away. I pancaked again, if anything flatter than before. This time it was in a path of weeds. Good tall ones, too, luckily for me. The gunner guessed wrong in their height. His bullets were mowing 'em down like a farmer goin' through a hay field. A few inches lower and it would have been *finis la guerre* for yours truly. He was a persistent cuss, too, because he must have wasted a bushel or two of bullets before he called it a day.

Nelson and Blackmore and Smith were twenty feet or so behind me and when Fritz had knocked off for a moment I slithered back to them.

"Those Heinies don't seem to like me," I remarked.

"What do you expect 'em to do, Cap?" growled Hans. "Serve you beer and pretzels?"

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CHAPTER XVII

JOKES AND DEATH AT ST. MIHIEL

I Lose out on a Suicide Party—We Shoot for a Pistol —Our Cunning Apache Is Captured and Escapes Across No Man's Land—From the Vosges to St. Mihiel— "Stop, Hell! My Objective's Berlin."

BUT the Boche didn't abandon their little plan to run us out of that stronghold just because their gas and liquid fire and machine-gun bullets had failed the first time. They were persistent devils and evidently figured there were more ways than one to skin a cat. The next thing they did was to turn their artillery on our concrete positions. Then a red-nosed Fokker, one of those birds with an automatic camera on board, came over and circled around us.

"What'n hell's he up to?" asked Corporal Sullivan.

"Mebbe he's come over to drop us some postal cards with the Kaiser's Fourth-of-July greetings! Yeh, mebbe," replied hard-boiled Hans.

That Fokker was takin' pictures to see where the shells had landed and to tip off their battery as to the exact range. But he was wastin' his time. We'd already filled up every shell hole with green branches and all his

pictures would show was a peaceful country scene. Then along came some more shells with that Fokker Johnny right on the spot, flyin' low. He was gettin' a bit too fresh, and as I hadn't had much real target practice since that last bear came near gettin' me in Alaska I decided to give him my compliments. One bullet may have nicked him, too, because he gave a lurch, righted himself, whirled and zoomed back to the German lines.

As soon as the Frogs taught us the geography of one section, orders would come to pull up and go somewhere else.

"What the hell, Bill, ain't we ever goin' to fight anything in this man's war except cooties? When does the row start?" was the general complaint.

But we got it, and in a double dose when it did come. One day orders came for a scout platoon of sixty men to be made up from the Second and Third battalions, to go out on a strafin' party. I figured it would be a good idea to pick men who volunteered for the job, and men who knew how to shoot. From the orders, it didn't sound like any Sunday-school picnic. The job was to penetrate the German lines, attack their strong points, and round up a bunch of prisoners. In calling for volunteers I told my lads:

"This is what those who know more about it than we do call a suicide party, and return tickets aren't guaranteed."

Everybody volunteered, so I finally lined 'em up, including six of the boys from my own company, all of whom were old regulars except Acuna, the Indian. That

redskin was an A-1 shot with pistol and rifle, and he didn't know the meaning of nerves.

"Maybe you taka me too?" piped up Pulcino.

And all that got from the rest of the crowd was a raucous jeer.

"Have a heart, Johnnie," one of the boys laughed. "Mebbe we gotta da chance to dodge them Dutchmen, but if you come out with us with that trick shootin' of yours you'll finish off all of us."

"Nope, you gotta me wrong," replied Pulcino. "I fighta weeth da handa grenade. I trow heem lika da basa-ball, you bet."

That striker of mine was no coward when it came to hand grenades. I guess the reason was because he didn't have to hold 'em while they exploded. But he just couldn't get on intimate terms with any weapon that went off while you held it.

I started training my platoon for hand-to-hand combat and I kept the boys at it until they had the technique down pat. Then an accident came along and put me out of the picture. While I was demonstrating how to make use of foul wrestling holds in order to get the advantage of a Boche in a clinch so as to disarm him, I had a chap work out with me who was supposed to act as though he was the German. He was a brawny giant who had soldiered in the Russian army before migrating to America, and it turned out that he had a better command of hand-to-hand military tactics than he did of the English language.

"You get a scissor hold, and then a hammer lock, like

this," I was explaining. Then I made a grab for his wrist. But old boy Ivanofski apparently didn't savvy what I was sayin'. All he knew was that it was a fine rough-and-tumble game, and he got so enthusiastic about showin' off to the lads that he forgot to just do what I wanted him to do. Quick as greased lightnin' he got hold of my hand, drew my arm under him, and sent me into a head-first spin over his back. When I came down, my shoulder struck on a rock and snapped. That Russian lad sure knew his stuff. The only trouble was he used it at the wrong time, and there I was with my shoulder smashed, completely out of the game.

They sent me back to the hospital at Bruyères. I was itching to get back to my outfit and into action, so as soon as they would allow me I began taking long hikes to get in trim. Another officer kept me company on these jaunts. And one day when we were passing a farmhouse an old peasant came hobbling out in his wooden shoes and smock. He fired a long string of French at us. It was coming too fast for my ear.

"What's the old boy driving at?" I asked my companion.

"Yeh, me too. It's over my head."

So I got out my phrase book. I found the sentence I wanted. That was a corking book. It explained just how to pronounce any old thing you wanted.

"*Zehr ner voo kompron par,*" I read off to the old Frenchman. But he just looked blank. I guess I might as well have talked Siwash Indian to him. Then he began making motions and beckoned for us to follow him into

his house. There he opened a drawer in a chest and pulled out a gat. It was an American weapon and must have been left by somebody in the artillery company that had been camped there a while back. He held it out to us, at arm's length, as though it might suddenly go off or bite him. Evidently he didn't care any more about firearms than my striker. Anyhow, he didn't want it around and insisted upon our taking it.

"Let's shoot for it to see who is going to be the owner of the thing," I suggested to Captain Brown.

"But your shooting arm is still in a sling," he replied.

"Oh, that's O. K. I'll take my turn at it, left-handed."

There were six bullets in the thing, and we each took three shots at a target, and I got a bull's-eye.

"It's yours, Woodfill. Anybody who can give me a trimming like that, and do it left-handed, certainly deserves the loot!" said my companion.

I wanted it, anyhow, because I'd loaned my revolver to Sergeant Singleton just before coming to the hospital and I figured I might never see it again. My old one was a .45 Colt frontier model, and one of the most perfect shooting irons I ever fired. As soon as I got back to the company I asked him about it.

"Here she is," he said, "and she's sure seen some real action since you packed it last."

Then he told me what that platoon of mine had done after I got knocked out. It had gone out on several scouting expeditions, and Acuna had seen Sergeant Singleton with my revolver. He knew what it could do, so he talked the sergeant into letting him carry it.

Acuna shoved it inside his shirt when they set out on a raid.

Well, they ran bang into a nest of Germans and right off the bat Acuna was taken prisoner. They hurriedly took his rifle, and his own automatic, and then left one German to guard him while they went off into the bush to see if they could round up the rest of the Yankee platoon. Old Acuna had all the cunning of his redskin ancestors. While he and the guard were standing there waitin' for the other Germans to come back, Acuna figured out a plan. Suddenly he gave a jump as though he had been startled, and stared hard over the sentry's shoulder. The German whirled to see what was up, and in that split second Acuna jerked out my Colt from his shirt, jammed it into the sentry's side, bumped him off, and then made a dash for the brush.

Another German came out of a thicket at that moment and drew a bead on Acuna at almost point-blank range. As the Indian ran a bullet crashed into his heel, plowed right along the leg to his knee and stripped the flesh from his calf right down to the bone. He spun around, and flopped to the ground, and played possum till the bullets stopped. Then he crawled through the weeds and brush to the American lines, bleeding like a stuck pig. Somehow he managed to reach our farthest outpost with just enough strength left to call for help. A litter was sent out to bring him in. Then they gave him a ticket to the U. S. A. on the next hospital ship, and also a citation for bravery.

When I got back to the company it was along toward

the end of August, just a few days before orders came for us to move and join the St. Mihiel drive. Captain Ventress had been relieved of command of Company M and transferred over to Engineer troops. I was placed in permanent command with the rank of "acting captain." The battalion now was under Major Lee Davis, and Colonel Frank B. Hawkins was our regimental commander, with the whole Fifth Division bossed by General McMahon.

When orders came for us to start moving up north they let us ride on the first leg of the trip. A long string of these huge French camions blew in one morning and they loaded us up, twenty-five to a camion. All that day and the next night we rode, or rather bumped, over France. We were so tired we slept sittin' up, leanin' against each other. During the middle of the day they let us hop out long enough to get coffee and chow from a rolling mess kitchen. Then off we went again. Ahead of us, and behind us, as far as we could see there was nothing but these trucks, with the headlights of one just about a hand's breadth behind the tail lights of the one next to it, only the lights were not on. The drivers of those camions were slant-eyed chaps called Annamites, and we had to take off our hats to those Chinks. In spite of driving tail to tail through the darkness, they pulled us through without a smash-up.

Next morning when we rolled out we were up beyond the city of Nancy. This was in a section where German airmen were all the time comin' over and sprayin' the landscape with their TNT eggs. So the orders were

for us to keep out of sight as much as possible until night, and then move on again. Stiff and weary, we got out, that is, all of us did except three men in one truck who didn't move. They had been knocked cold by carbon monoxide fumes from the motor. But that was an every-day occurrence in these camions.

When night came we were off again. Then next day we'd hide in a woods and at dusk continue our jaunt north. Only now we were making all these trips on foot instead of in trucks. The fall rains were on, so we had a ducking under the dripping trees by day and a lot of slippin' and slidin' over muddy roads at night.

We didn't know exactly where we were. But afterward we found out how the Germans had been holding a wedge-shaped sector in that region with the French city of St. Mihiel right near the tip of it. The farthest west point in their wedge was too strongly fortified for a frontal attack. So General Pershing tried squeezing in the wedge from each side, like pinchers. The idea was to make an attempt to cut off that point, straighten out the German line, and round up as many of the Boches as possible. Pershing had nine army divisions in this show, or in all about sixty thousand French troops and a million Americans.

"I'll be damned if I don't think there are a million Yanks movin' up this one road," grumbled Sam Gowler.

It sure was the heaviest traffic any of us ever seen, and to all appearances there was nothing but confusion in that whole section of France, with M. P.'s hoppin' around adding to the chaos. But somehow they got us

all untangled. We came to one place where there was a road reserved entirely for gun carriages. Motor vehicles were forbidden on it. And it was right at that point, so the yarn went, that a spankin' big limousine came nosin' up through the jam without stoppin' when one of these M. P.'s yelled "Halt!" The M. P. was so busy directin' the traffic on all sides of him that he didn't notice the four stars on that limousine.

"Stop that damn car, or I'll shoot!" he shouted, as he pulled his automatic.

The limousine stopped! And an officer stuck out his head. It was General John J. himself. The limousine proceeded.

So on it went through the night. Daylight came and up ahead was a farm where we were to stop. Buzzing through the air above us was a huge German bomber. He dropped his reveille in the shape of a nice big juicy bomb. The only thing wrong with it was that it turned out to be a dud. That baby was five feet long and about a foot thick. It plowed a hole in the muddy field where it fell that would have been big enough for an elephant's bathtub. Then it bounced right up on top of the ground again. If that darned thing had gone off it would have given our whole battalion a free ride across the River Jordan. We just took a look, hunched our packs a bit higher, and plowed on. When you've been hikin' through the mud all night with a full army kit on your back you don't care a hoot whether an aërial bomb is a live one or a dud.

On September 13th we moved into the St. Mihiel sec-

tor, under a barrage from the American guns that sounded like the whangin' of all the stamp mills on earth. I never heard such a roar of artillery before or since. There was an incessant thundering boom, boom, boom coming from our rear, thousands of shells went screaming and screeching overhead. From up a little ways, over in the German lines, came the roar of ten thousand explosions. The sky flamed up as though the Northern lights and a thousand forest fires were puttin' on a show all at the same time. All through the night there was the pounding of the .75's. Then came a dull, steady roar that drowned out the .75's. The first clap sent our tin hats leapin' into the air until our chin straps pulled 'em back with a bang. The big long-range fellows were addressin' themselves to the Boche now.

The German artillery opened up in reply. Thousands of tons of explosives were hurtlin' through the air over our heads in both directions. Whenever there was a slight lull in the roar of the big guns we could hear the staccato crash of countless machine guns. And through it all the infantry kept marchin' up.

It was the second day of the St. Mihiel drive when we finally moved into action. Word came back that a platoon was needed to fill a gap up ahead next to some marines. So I sent in a detachment under Corporal Sullivan. After he had been pushing through some underbrush a bit he sighted a German plane diving at them.

"You blankety blank so-and-so!" yelled the little corporal. He emptied his automatic at the plane and his whole squad cut loose with their rifles. They riddled that

diving Boche combat ship as full of holes as a sieve. They got it, too, and it side-slipped down into the marine lines. Sullivan and his men pushed on up to fill the gap that they had started for.

The rest of us reached our objective without any fighting, and then we stopped—that is, we all did except Private Smith. For some reason or other that lad was like a Malay run amuck. He was all for goin' right on over the crest of the little rise up ahead of us, and he did.

"Hey, you," yelled his buddy. "Dig in!"

"Dig in? What for?"

"This is our objective. Orders is for us to stop here."

"Stop, hell! My objective's Berlin!"

I was busy some distance off when this happened and the rest of the boys were too much interested in their own affairs to bother about the ambitions of a loony chap like Smith. We all dug in and waited. Crouchin' there in the dark, we listened to the pounding of the big guns and wished that dawn would hurry up and come. When no further orders arrived I sent a runner back to Major Davis. He brought word that we were to withdraw for a ways because the German resistance had already been smashed and they didn't need us to go over the top. So we had missed out on the real excitement of the show.

Four days later, on the 17th of September, our whole regiment of Sixteenth Infantry was relieved and we marched back to Malancourt and Liverdun. There we had another short stretch of intensive training, mostly machine-gun practice, firing Stokes mortars at

different targets, visible and invisible, and always rifle practice, and then more rifle practice. It was needed, all right. They were sending us a lot more green rookies who had been trained on the old Enfield rifles. So when these rookies were presented with modern army Springfields they hardly even knew how to shoot the darn things, let alone hit the mark. It was just about the next thing to cold murder to send raw men up against the veterans of the German army. Every time an outfit would send those green troops over the top, which happened often, a half or two thirds of these lads would get bumped off. This sort of experience made the old-timers shake their heads. It looked like the A. E. F. was paying a rather stiff price for Uncle Sam's lack of preparedness. But the Germans had been fightin' like wild cats all along the front and our lads were needed, no matter whether they were green or not.

I don't mean by this that the rookies comin' up weren't keen to learn. But they were discovering, in rather costly fashion, that this war business wasn't all flags and cheering. The only way to help 'em save their skins was to cram the fine points of the fightin' game into 'em in one helluva hurry. But the green troops were all stout fellows and whatever they lacked in technique they came near making up for in enthusiasm. They'd do a thing on the spur of the moment that many a trained old-timer would never even consider. We didn't win any victories in France because of superior training. We accomplished most of the things that we did as a result

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of youth, pep, courage, and the "orders-be-damned" individual initiative of our chaps in most cases.

From what I saw of the war, the idea seemed to be to train our chaps to the highest degree of efficiency that we possibly could in the time we had, fill 'em up with propaganda, and then shove 'em into the front and let 'em hop to it. Personally, I never had much luck at workin' up any spirit of hatred against the lads we were fightin'. Maybe I'd had too many German friends in my time. I couldn't forget how old John Ott used to make flapjacks for me up in Alaska, nor Max Bachmann with his beer and music, and my old grandfather tellin' me, "Ve vill haf no more vars." But we were having a war, and a stiffer one than men were ever mixed up in. And our business in France was to kill the other fellow before he could plug us. But I hadn't any pet hatred then, and since the thing is over I see less reason than ever for nursing a grudge or for hard feelings.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE BEGINNING OF MY BIG ADVENTURE

Moving up to the Argonne—Caught in a Shallow Trench—With Bullets Ripping Through My Clothes, I Write What I Believe Will Be My Last Letter Home —The Spy in Our Division—A Shell Puts Me to Sleep.

SHORTLY after the St. Mihiel push the rumor went through the A. E. F. that something big was in the air. And that something was the Meuse-Argonne drive—just about the biggest battle in history. It was to last forty-six days—forty-six days of rain and mud and death and general hell such as no American army had ever faced—and it was to end up with the signing of the Armistice, the end of the World War.

Nine American divisions were being massed along a battlefront from the Meuse River on the east to the Aire River and the Argonne Forest to the west. Other divisions were being held in waiting, ready to go in at any moment. At the east end of this battle line was the famous Fighting Thirty-third. At the west end was the Seventy-seventh Division under Major General Robert Alexander, the same Alexander who had been my captain out in the Philippines eighteen years before. And that Seventy-seventh sure made history before it got

through with this show. Part of it, you will recall, was the Lost Battalion.

Our army was so big that there were a lot of commanding officers whom I knew very little about. But the Seventy-seventh was lucky to have a general like Alexander. During the advance in the Argonne forest, when the going was heartbreaking enough to wreck the morale of any outfit, General Alexander went right in under fire and visited every company along his section of the front. And that bucked his men up a lot. They all said, "If the general is game to face that fire, so are we." Then they had another go at it, crossed the Aire River, and captured the town of Grand Pré.

Meanwhile our Fifth Division was getting ready and a lot of changes had taken place all down the line. Not only were they sendin' up a lot of green rookies, but they even switched generals on us. McMahon, an able commander, was pretty well along in years, and evidently headquarters figured this was a young man's war. So they tried to take advantage of his long experience by sending him to the States to help organize and train new outfits there. Major General Hanson Ely came up to take his place. He was an officer I had known in the days when he had been on the staff of General Lloyd Wheaton back in the Philippines. At the head of my brigade was Brigadier General J. C. Castner, and every man liked "Uncle Joe" because he was a born scrapper. My outstanding recollection of him now is of the day I saw him trudging along a road with shells kickin' up the landscape all around him. Instead of taking

to a dugout he just moseyed right along, even though his two hundred pounds did make quite a sizable target.

The Meuse-Argonne battle broke during the last week of September. Then the Fifth Division began to move up, and what a sight it was! The roads were jammed with long lines of trucks, gun carriages, and tanks. Flat cars went by loaded with big guns. Hospital trains rumbled toward the front to remind a fellow that this might be his last hike. Hundreds of thousands of men were moving up, with top sergeants and M. P.'s bellowin' orders almost loud enough to be heard by the Kaiser in his palace on the Spree.

Liverdun—Blercourt—Bois de Hesse—Malancourt—Montfaucon. Sam Gowler pointed to a white tower high up on a hill overlooking the stretch of country around the Aire and the Meuse.

"That's where the Crown Prince came to take a look at the attacks on Verdun. I read somewhere that the Boche had a big periscope up there."

The Seventy-ninth Division had preceded us to this locality and had captured the town. I understood they took that periscope, too, and then later on it was shipped to West Point, where it is still used. At any rate, the Seventy-ninth didn't leave any fightin' for us in that locality. The Germans had been pushed farther back, so we kept on hikin'. They only let us march at night because there were too many German sausage balloons around, ready to turn their artillery on us. Each day was like every other—ruined villages, forests blown

to kindlin' wood, fresh shell craters, mud, and rain, rain, rain. You got so numb you didn't even notice the cold and the wet. You just kept on marchin', and most of us got a snooze now and then while we moved.

From the vicinity of Montfaucon we pushed on toward the Ferme de Madeleine, just south of the village of Cunel. The Three Hundred and Nineteenth Infantry was holding the line in this vicinity and we were to relieve it. Our orders were to wait here behind the lines until we could get in touch with the Three Hundred and Thirty-ninth and find out from them what had been happening. Judgin' by the sound of the cannonading, whatever had been happenin' was still goin' on.

"They gave us a terrific lambasting yesterday," an artilleryman of the Three Hundred and Nineteenth told me. "A couple of Salvation Army lassies came up, against orders, and rigged up a kitchen in a ruined building. We told them to go back but they wouldn't listen. They just went right on makin' coffee and doughnuts. Of course, that kitchen of theirs was like heaven to the boys. The poor devils had been in action for about a week. But in no time at all Boche observation planes spotted the men gathering around that place and flashed the news to their batteries. The first shell they sent over made a direct hit. The doughnut kitchen was blown to smithereens, and both girls were killed. They just buried 'em over in that field this morning. Gave 'em full military honors, too."

Headquarters of the Three Hundred and Nineteenth was in a dugout on the Madeleine Farm, a couple of

miles up ahead. A dozen of us set out for the place to get advance information as to the positions we were to take over. Among them were Major Davis, our battalion commander, Captain Allworth of Company I, Captain Haywood of Company C, Sergeant Nelson, two or three other top sergeants, and several orderlies. We crawled through a stretch of brush and woods for a few hundred feet. There sure must have been a tough session in that locality. The Litter Corps hadn't finished cleaning up, and the woods was simply covered with rotting horses, dead men, human hands and feet, shoes half filled with flesh and bones, blood, mud, filth, and stench.

At the end of the woods we came to a little clearing. It was all cut up with shell holes like a Swiss cheese, with big pieces of corrugated iron standing up on end. Right below us was the ravine with the dugout that we were headed for. We could see the lads of the Three Hundred and Nineteenth advancing in a skirmish line, pushing the Germans back. Rifle and machine-gun fire crackled on all sides, and it sounded like a thousand steel rivetting machines all going at once.

We decided to take a chance on nipping across the open field. We were in a bit of a hurry and decided it would take too long to make a wide detour through the woods. Besides, the Germans seemed to be much too busy trying to hold off the Three Hundred and Nineteenth to pay any attention to us. But we guessed wrong.

Some German machine gunners covering the Boche retreat noticed us just as the two majors in the party

were almost down to the ravine. The rest of us were scattered all over the field, right out in the clear. When they opened up some of the boys bobbed into an abandoned German dugout. Some of the others dove behind pieces of sheet iron, and the rest of us flopped where we were. Somebody—no doubt the Germans during their retirement—had started to dig trenches in this field. But they had only got them a foot and a half deep when they changed their mind and kept on going in the direction of Berlin. The one I picked couldn't have been more than fourteen inches deep. When I pancaked in it, I was just out of sight and that was all. But the pack on my back stuck up above the edge of the ditch as plain as the wart on your nose.

The machine gunner who cut loose in my direction was a real marksman, too. Plunk! a bullet sunk into my pack. Then two more ripped through it. Then a hail of them sprayed the ground hardly two feet from my head, kicking dirt all over me. My thoughts were a bit disconnected, but I kept wonderin' why that gunner was pickin' on me. I hoped the rest of the boys had found better cover.

Then several more machine guns joined the party. The Boches were sweeping the entire field now, making sieves out of those pieces of corrugated iron. And as the bullets splattered on them it made a din like the rattle of hailstones on a tin roof.

All I could do was lay still and hug the bottom of my little trench. A cootie started a slow promenade down my spine. I didn't even dare scratch. There wasn't any

chance for me to even raise my head long enough to get a sight of anything, although I had my rifle with me and my fingers itched to take a crack at that machine gunner who was directing his attention to me.

The way the bullets were plowing up the ground all around me and zipping through my pack I figured the jig was up. Then to liven things up still more that machine gunner must have invited his artillery to attend the party. Suddenly there was a whine above the rat-a-tat-tat of the machine guns. A German .77 plowed into the field ten or twelve paces behind me. The second one exploded nearer still. A shower of dirt and corrugated iron rattled on my tin hat and half buried me. Mebbe the next one would have my name on it.

I was trapped without a chance to do a darn thing. I didn't want to hand in my checks to old St. Peter without scribbling a final message to my wife. In my blouse pocket was the picture of her in wedding dress that I always carried there. I slipped it out, fumbled and found a stub of a pencil. On the back I put her address in Fort Thomas, Kentucky, and then amid the roar of exploding shells and the crackle of machine-gun bullets, I wrote her what I thought was sure to be a farewell message.

I had guessed wrong once more. There was no German ammunition with my name on it that day. The .77's stopped coming over, and the machine-gun fire died down, too. The Three Hundred and Nineteenth had messed up the German gunners for us and chased them over the nearest hill. Everything in our immediate

October 18, 1918.

In case of Accident or
Death It is my last and
fondest desire that the finder
of my remains shall please
do me a last and everlasting
favor to please forward this
picture to my Darling
Wife. And tell her that I have
fallen on the field of Honor,
and departed to a better land
which knows no sorrow and
feels no pain. I will prepair
a place and be waiting at the
Golden Gait of Heaven for
the arrival of my Darling
Blossom.
The address
Mrs Samuel Woodfill
167 Alexandria Pike
Fort Thomas Kentucky

Photographic facsimile of note that Woodfill wrote on the back of his wife's portrait. At the time of writing he was under fire from an enemy machine gun, had no chance to retaliate and expected any moment might be his last.

vicinity was quiet again. Into my mind came that remark that Hightower had made to me years before in Alaska: "Sam, the only way they'll ever kill you is by hangin'."

A tin hat poked itself around a curve in the ditch just ahead of me, and Hans Nelson's red face appeared under it.

"My God," he whispered, "I thought sure they'd nailed you."

His eyes fell on the pencil and picture I was just shovin' in my pocket.

"Yeh, me too," he grinned. "I never figured on gettin' out of that mess, so I thought I'd better write a little note, too, while the writin' was good. Now I've gone to all that trouble for nothin'."

We stuck our heads up over the edge, and thanked the Lord they weren't torn off. Ten other tin helmets appeared at scattered points. So the gang was all present and accounted for. As we started crawlin' on toward the place we were headed for in the bottom of the ravine there was a movement in a clump of weeds beside us—and then somebody callin'. We parted the weeds and there we found a German officer with his legs half blown off.

"Wasser, wasser," he moaned.

Major Haywood pulled out his canteen and gave the poor chap a drink.

"Let's just leave him here and then we'll pick him up and carry him back when we return in a few minutes," he said.

Three doughboys bringing in eight Heinies, who look rather pleased at the prospect of building roads and eating American food for the remainder of the war.

An American outpost in the Argonne near where Woodfill of the Regulars carried out one of the greatest single-handed feats in the history af modern warfare.

The two majors continued on down to the dugout while the rest of us took to cover in the bushes so as to watch the action up ahead. When the majors found out what they wanted we all started back, and two of the boys picked up an abandoned litter. They rolled the German officer on it and carried him to the nearest first-aid station. A little later we managed to wangle some fairly important information out of him.

We had four regiments of infantry back there waitin' to be sent into the line, and as soon as it was dark we pushed across the Ferme de Madeleine and relieved the Three Hundred and Nineteenth. I found the commander whose place I was to take mighty anxious to get the survivors of his company back to the rear. He only had a handful left and he was just itchin' to get them out before the night barrage came over.

Guides were sent to lead us to our positions, and we filtered up, two men abreast, sticking to the woods. The lads we were relieving plodded back past us, tired, dirty, and nearly dead for want of sleep. They had been crawling through those woods under fire for days and were plastered from head to foot with mud.

"By Jiminy, that's a helluva lookin' outfit," Nelson remarked to one of the guides who was showin' us the way.

"Yeh, that's what one fellow up ahead told his colonel."

"What!"

"Sure. The old boy was a bear for inspection. To look at that colonel you'da thought he traveled with a squad

of valets. His men got the devil so many times from him for lookin' like tramps that they did everything but carry manicure sets until they came up to the firing line. Well, this colonel was crawlin' along through the mud, in a rather tight place, with a five-day beard disguisin' his map, and with the rest of his uniform caked with mud.

" 'Hey, buddy,' sang out a private in a near-by shell hole, 'I just heard the old man's around, and he thinks this yere army's made up of Beau Brummels and hot sports. You better clean up a bit before he gives you the once-over because you sure are a hot-lookin' mess.' "

Of course the Germans knew when our reliefs were scheduled to come up each night and that was the time when they started sending over bouquets of shells, just to make us feel at home. They must have had a lot of crack spies because they seemed to know every time we made a move.

As a matter of fact, we found a spy right in our own division. He had been in the American army for twenty-one years before the war, and now was an officer in the artillery. His outfit was sending out a barrage schedduled for the German lines. But they were firin' short, right into the American infantry. So a runner was sent back to tip him off and stop him. Well, that runner had to cross a river and a valley swept by shells and machine guns in order to reach the battery positions, but he somehow made it.

An hour later the guns from that outfit were still firin' short. The first sergeant servin' under this par-

ticular artillery officer tried to put him right. But the officer told him to mind his own business. When he said that he reached for his pistol. But the sergeant was quicker on the draw and killed him on the spot. That officer had actually been in the pay of the German Secret Service. Near the gun position he had a secret hiding place for carrier pigeons, and he also had hidden wires leading to the German outposts. In his pockets were German codes and messages.

Well, the Three Hundred and Nineteenth was right in expecting a barrage at the time when we started to take over. We made that relief with German and American shells screechin' overhead and with machine-gun bullets fanning our whiskers.

"Halt, and dig in!" We had taken positions just behind the crest of a ridge of hills, and directly facin' the next series of German lines. But they didn't give us any time to dig trenches. Fortunately, there were plenty of shell holes, but most of them had a foot of water in them and the rain was coming down in sheets. The order was sent around for not more than two men to crowd in each shell hole. Scatterin' 'em out in that way was about the only chance to avoid heavy casualties.

A runner came up with orders from Major Davis instructin' me to take eight men and patrol the woods off to the right. There was no firing from this vicinity, but the major figured the Germans might be playing possum. We crawled into them in the dark and scouted all around. Aside from wallowin' in a lot of mighty wet mud and comin' up with a crash against a tree now

and then in the blackness, we didn't find anything. There wasn't a German in the place.

Our way back to our fox holes led over a wooden bridge. Evidently the Germans had wired it, because the minute we set foot on it—whang! bang! the shells started poppin' all around us. About a dozen of them came over, but luckily everyone was an overshot.

We crawled back through the rain on all fours. I sent in my report to the major and then made for the shell holes. Sergeant Nelson was my fellow sardine in that slimy ooze for the night, and I crawled down beside him.

"Well, what the hell are those blasted Heinies doin'?" he inquired. "Bringin' up a truckload of iron crosses to hand out to us to-morrow?"

Under the circumstances, that shell hole reminded us of home—because it was so different. But with our raincoats spread over us, we were a bit better off than a lot of poor devils in a machine-gun company who hadn't yet reached their position and were still ploddin' past us toward the woods we had just patrolled. I could see their silhouettes in the dark—one man with a machine gun, one with a tripod, and so on.

Suddenly it dawned on me that they were headed the wrong way. Instead of makin' for the woods I had just patrolled, they were goin' straight toward another woods which we knew was chuck-full of Germans. So I crawled out of my hole and stopped one of the men. We had to speak in whispers.

"Where you goin'?"

"Aw, to some position in these woods right up in front."

"You'll catch hell up there. Your orders must be wrong. Those woods are lousy with Germans."

"By Gosh, the captain up ahead certainly don't know that. I wish you'd hurry up and tell him."

So I sneaked along to the captain and grabbed him by the arm. The front end of his column was so far up it's a wonder the Germans hadn't already cut loose at them. Those Heinies were hardly more than spittin' distance away.

"You're headed the wrong direction, old-timer," I whispered.

"Wrong me eye. We're bound for those woods up there."

That was an unhealthy place to start a debate, so I motioned him back over the crest of the hill. We crawled down into a shell hole with our raincoats over our heads and he showed me his map with a flashlight and pointed out with a lead pencil what he figured his route was.

"See," he said, "there are the woods."

But I knew he wasn't readin' his map right.

"Yeh, but those aren't the right woods. The place you're supposed to be headed for is off here—this other woods. I've just patrolled 'em, and they're empty."

Still that bird didn't believe me. But while we were talkin' his lieutenant squeezed down into the hole with us. He took a look at the map and agreed with me right off.

"Well, come on, show us these damn woods you're talking about," the machine gunner captain said.

So I told him I'd be glad to see him through to the right place. We had to cross that blasted German bridge again. And as soon as we hit it the Boche gunners were right on the job. The machine-gun company scattered into the field. How many were bumped off I don't know. But the captain got the rest together and started on.

"Your woods are just ahead of you," I told him. "Maybe you had better patrol 'em again to make sure the Germans haven't filtered in."

"I still don't agree with you," were the last words he threw back at me, by way of parting thanks. The last I heard of them he was pushing on, chewing the rag with his lieutenant, and trimming his remarks with one of the fanciest exhibitions of cursing I'd heard since Jim Cameron's pack mules got stuck in a sink hole in Alaska.

It was so darn dark I could hardly follow the road going back. I figured I'd steer clear of that bridge this time. But I stepped on the first board before I realized I'd reached it. Then I jumped back. But I was just a shade too late. There was a clap of thunder right in the tree over my head. Then I passed out.

The next thing I knew was the rain beatin' in my face. I lay there sort of fumblin' around in my mind wonderin' who I was and where and why. When I got all that figured out, I crawled to my feet. I seemed to be all in one piece and with no wounds. Evidently it was the shock of the explosion that had keeled me over. I felt

as though an iron rod had been driven right through my ears, and my nose was bleedin' like sixty. I set out for the rest of the jaunt back to our position, through darkness that was thicker than a stack of black cats. That explosion had sort of put the kibosh on my sense of direction. Oh, well, I thought to myself, mebbe one shell hole will be as good as another. So I slipped down into one. There was a quick movement, and I threw out my hand. It hit a raised bayonet.

"Hey, you! It's me!" I yelled.

"Gosh, Lieutenant, you nearly got it through the gizzard that time. Your private shell hole's just over there, the second one to the right."

I found Nelson and crawled in. The Germans were still sending over a few big ones now and then, just to be ornery and prevent us from doin' any steady sleeping. It was still pouring rain, pouring more than ever —the wettest rain I'd felt in twenty years of soldiering. But I discovered that if I lay on one side long enough without moving, the water inside my clothes would begin to feel warm and then I'd drop off for a few winks. If you get tired enough you can sleep anywhere, even with a few hundred cooties to keep you company.

When I woke up the next time I found myself just about to float out of that hole. The water was almost up to the top. So I salvaged my pack and crawled along a little embankment a couple of feet high. Maybe it would be enough to protect me from the shells. Of course, it was lucky for us that the ground was muddy, because the shells would all sink two or three feet into

the mud before they went off, and when they did explode the spray of shrapnel would go high in the air instead of spreading out. If you could manage to find some sort of protection from the flying fragments you didn't need to worry about anything but a direct hit. And of course, there wasn't much use worrying about direct hits, either.

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CHAPTER XIX

A FRONTIERSMAN STALKS MACHINE GUNS

My Company Advances into a Wood Full of Germans —Held up by Machine-gun Nests, I Attempt to Push on Alone.

THE orders came a few minutes before six o'clock. The third battalion and a machine-gun company were to advance up the line of the railway east of Cunel and make a combat reconnaissance of the Bois de Pultière, the woods in front of us, to find the line of German resistance. In other words, over the top and fight! Zero hour was six o'clock.

"We have da beega fight?" Pulcino asked me. He had been sleepin' in the fox hole next to Nelson and me.

"Looks like it," I told him. "Lots of shootin' in this fight, maybe, Pulcino."

"I no care, *Tenènte*. I go weeth you."

It would be suicide for that poor wop. I told him he would be needed as a litter bearer. I thought I was giving him a chance, but it just worked the other way. You can't trick fate like that, I found.

The rain had stopped, and a thick fog had settled

over the woods. So much the better. The Germans wouldn't be able to make any long-range observations. And so, at the stroke of six, over the crest we went, in long skirmish lines spread out through the woods, sixteen paces apart, rifles ready, and bayonets fixed.

The first part of the advance was through the shrubbery. The fog and the bushes hid us from the Germans. Then there was a clearing, where a little railway line ran through the ravine, and beyond that the woods we were headin' for.

The first line of men emerged into the clearing. A spattering fusillade of German machine-gun fire met us. A half dozen of my men spun around and dropped. Sergeant Smith was just at my left. He gave a grunt.

"Hit?" I asked.

He didn't answer. He took three more steps, toppled, and fell dead across the railway track. In the same moment I heard the first whine of a shell overhead. The Germans were givin' us the whole works, from soup to nuts, before we could even see anything to shoot at.

Another shell burst a few rods to my right, just between two of my men. The concussion hurled them end over end like a leaf hit by a whirlwind. I thought they were done for, but before I could get over to them they were back on their hands and knees, grabbin' their guns, and continuing the advance.

We made a few more yards. The machine guns were spittin' a swath of fire that was cuttin' the men down like a mowin' machine; the hell of shelling was growing worse. It was the first real baptism of fire they had had.

It was too much for Ritchey, the youngster who'd lied about his age to enlist. I saw him drop to the ground half dazed, and then get up and start firing wildly, back in the direction he'd come from. His buddy grabbed him and pulled him down in the brush.

The advance was held up. Men were droppin' to the ground to escape that deadly rain of machine-gun bullets. To order them straight ahead into the face of that would mean wiping out the whole company.

The only thing to do was to find out where that first machine gun was and get it. And I didn't believe in askin' any of my men to do something I wouldn't do myself. I motioned my men to stay behind me. Then I cached my pack in some bushes at the edge of the wood and made a dash across the opening to the first shell hole and dropped. I just made it. There was a rain of bullets so close I could feel the heat of them on my face. The fire was comin' from three different directions. One gun was over at my right in an abandoned stable, another was somewhere in front of me, and the third was from the church tower in the little village, two or three hundred yards away at my left.

Lying in the shell hole, I got a bead on that church tower. I couldn't see the gunner, but I fired a clip of ammunition from my rifle into the little window. The fire stopped. I had killed the gunner or driven him off. I turned my fire to the stable. A board had been removed in the gable end, and I aimed for the hole. Again I couldn't see the result of my shootin', but no more enemy fire came from there.

I made a dash for the next shell hole, and the bullets swept over me as I dropped. The fire was all comin' from the front now. I waited until the gunner thought he'd got me. When the fire swept past I made another dash and dropped in the next shell hole. Queer I should feel so out of breath. I was weak, and gasping. I knew then I'd run into a patch of mustard gas. My eyes were stinging; my nose and throat felt raw. The air in that hole was full of fumes like you get when you grate horseradish.

I had to get out of that shell hole and up out of that ravine. I had a gas mask with me, but I knew if I put the blamed thing on I couldn't see well enough to shoot. I crawled out, and again was greeted with fire. There wasn't another shell hole handy; nothin' but a clump of old thistle. I hit the open ground behind that. When the stream of fire shifted I began to move once more.

Lying flat on my stomach, I worked my way around a knoll to an old roadway and into the ditch and along it to a little pile of gravel. The bursts of fire had been comin' from a clump of bushes, just beyond. I laid my automatic out in front along with an extra clip of ammunition. Then, very cautiously, I slid my rifle forward, inch by inch, over the gravel heap, and lifted my head and shoulders. Forty feet ahead of me was that clump of bush. And stickin' out the front of it was the muzzle of a gun.

There isn't much difference between stalkin' animals and stalkin' humans. It was usin' the same tactics I had used in big-game huntin' in Alaska ten years before. It's

Raised to the rank of a temporary captain. On the left, another famous fighting man of Woodfill's Red Diamond Division, Major Edward Allworth, who distinguished himself by swimming the Meuse River under terrific fire.

all in outwittin' the other fellow. If a bear sees you first he will charge, tooth and claw. If these German gunners saw me first, the game would be up.

I strained my eyes toward the machine gun. They were stinging and smartin' from the mustard gas. I could see nothin' but the bushes and that fire-spittin' muzzle. Damn those field-gray German uniforms. Even at such a short distance they were almost invisible against the woods.

The light struck on something behind the muzzle. It was a camouflaged helmet. Below it the outlines of a face—I pulled the trigger. The helmet and face disappeared. The firing ceased.

I could make out the position better now. The gunner had been standin' in a little entrenchment behind the gun. As he dropped, a second man shoved him aside. took his place behind the gun, and reached out his hand to fire. I aimed and fired again. The second man dropped.

Four times a dead gunner was pulled away from the gun by a man who took his place, and each time I pulled the trigger of my rifle before he could open fire. The third and fourth ones must have known what to expect. That was nerve—to take their places knowin' they would be picked off. It was just a sample of the way the German army fought.

The next man tried to escape. Instead of takin' his place at the gun he began to crawl away. I saw him distinctly through the leaves and bushes. I fired again and he dropped.

That was five shots—all I had in one clip of ammunition. No time to reload. I picked up my automatic, and just in time. Another man was leaving the machine gun, this time on the run. I got him with the automatic.

All was quiet at the machine-gun nest. I waited, pistol in hand. Not a sign of life. I put a new clip of ammunition in my rifle and dashed across the road to the German position. There was the gun, and the pile of dead Germans behind it, with the tops of their heads torn off. There was nobody left to operate the gun. My men would be right behind me and could put it out of commission, so I didn't stop. I kept on up ahead.

I almost stumbled over a man sprawled on the ground. Another dead German. I started to swerve around him when he sprang to his feet, grabbed my rifle and threw it into the air. If his Luger had been in his hand instead of in its holster he could have got me. I snatched my pistol from my belt and fired; got him in the body and he doubled up with a grunt and dropped.

He was a big strappin' fellow, taller than I was, but very young. He must have been crawlin' up to the machine-gun nest to see what had happened. I looked at the insignia on his shoulder strap. An *Oberleutnant*. I ripped off the strap for good luck. That Luger of his might come in handy, too. I jammed it into my hip pocket.

No more Germans in sight. I could see some of my men creeping up near me. I signaled them to move forward. I knew Nelson was somewhere at my right. The

company was scattered through the wood; I had lost control of them as a unit. It was every man for himself now. That's where American initiative stood to advantage. The German soldiers fought as a trained machine. Those soldiers of mine, some of them so green they'd hardly smelled powder before, were on their own now. Sweatin' and swearin', they kept on toward the German lines. The only thing that stopped their followin' me was a German bullet.

I kept on through the trees and brush—crawlin', crouchin', and runnin'—dashin' from one point of cover to another, movin' forward in that hail of bullets and shells. A burst of fire came from another clump of bushes two hundred feet ahead of me. It was diagonally behind the first one. The enemy machine-gun pits were in zigzag position to cover the retreat of the German forces in front of us.

I dropped to the ground and began to crawl up a little farther to get a better range. Ping! The mud splashed in my face as a rifle bullet struck in the ground six inches in front of me. Another one plunked into the ground as I stopped. I half jumped, half rolled, behind the trunk of a tree. Evidently it was to be a case of sniper against sniper. Then the bullets stopped.

I learned later what happened. While that German sniper was lettin' fly at me one of my runners happened to take cover at the foot of the very tree where he was. The German saw him and fired straight down. His bullet passed an inch or two in front of the runner's nose and

hit the ground between his feet. Before the German could reload the runner took aim with his .45 and brought the sniper tumblin' down.

In the meantime I was creepin' up on the second machine-gun nest. The gun was in a shallow dugout, with the head and shoulders of the gunner in plain sight. There were five gunners in that dugout and I got all five the same as I had the crew on that first gun. As soon as one dropped I'd nail the next one when his head appeared as he tried to take over the gun.

When no more heads came in sight I crept up to the nest. The dead gunners lay in the dugout. This time I stopped long enough to fire a shot into the water-cooling system of the gun and put it out of commission, and then started deeper into the woods, around a patch of thick brush.

At that moment three German soldiers carrying ammunition came around some bushes. In the soft muddy ground, neither I nor they were making any noise, and we almost collided. They were carrying service rifles and tapes of machine-gun ammunition. As I raised my rifle to my shoulder they dropped the ammunition and raised their hands in a hurry.

I was movin' fast, but they moved faster.

"Kamerad, kamerad," they hollered.

Their fright was almost comical. They were nothin' but boys, and they were surrendering in dead earnest. I made sure they were disarmed.

"How far back are the Germans?" I asked them.

They shook their heads.

THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE A. E. F.

and the members of his staff, welcome a distinguished group of fighting men at Chaumont. In this group are seventeen heroes of the Argonne who received the highest of all American military decorations, the Congressional Medal of Honor. In the second row, third from the right, wearing an overseas cap and a bushy waxed mustache, is Sam Woodfill, whom General Pershing afterward described as the outstanding soldier of the American Army.

"How far? How far?" I tried sign language to show what I meant. They just shook their heads. What wouldn't I have given right then if my mother had only drilled some German into my skull when I was a youngster? I might have got some information from these boys.

I motioned them back to the rear. I knew the woods were full of my men and they couldn't escape. They went willingly, first takin' off their tin hats and slammin' them to the ground. Maybe it was an act of disgust. Then they trotted off.

There was continuous firing on all sides now as I kept on toward the German lines. There was the rattle of bullets just to the left of me. A mass of shrubbery an inch thick was moved off like hay; the bark flew from the tree beside me. I dropped in my tracks and crawled behind the roots of the tree. I located the machine gun by the bursts of fire. It was sweeping the ravine where my men were workin' through. The underbrush was so dense that a squad leader couldn't even have kept in sight of a handful of men in deployed formation.

Once more I crawled up on my stomach to get near the gun. The ground was lower here and softer. I simply wallowed in soup for thirty feet until I could get a better view. The third machine gun was in the woods on the edge of a trench that ran back into the enemy lines. The gunner was standing in that trench. I could just see the top of his head. That was enough. Once more I picked off five men with a clip of ammunition. Then no more heads appeared. I waited a few minutes. Not a

sign of life there. I raised up and started on a run toward the gun.

Another Boche outfit off to my right opened on me. I stepped on the gas and leaped into the trench for cover—and almost jumped square on top of a German. He was just crawlin' along the trench up to the machine gun. The quarters were too close for me to use my rifle, and I had my automatic ready. As he raised his Luger I fired. I beat him to it by a split second, and he doubled up and rolled to the ground.

Another German came rushin' from behind me around a turn in the trench, rifle in hand. I pulled the trigger. My automatic jammed. My eye fell on a long-handled pick-mattock stuck into the side of the trench. I grabbed it, and as the second German tried to level his rifle I crashed the pick down on his head with both hands. He fell like an ox.

I wheeled just in time to miss a bullet in the back from the first German. Wounded in the stomach, he still had enough strength to regain his Luger and aim. Another blow of the pick, and I finished him and bounded out of that trench.

The Germans were organizing their retreat. A runner was streaking across a little opening. I fired with my rifle and he dropped out of sight. Other forms appeared in the woods, and I kept on firin'. There was a noise behind me. Maybe they were surrounding me. I wheeled, rifle leveled.

"Don't shoot, Lieutenant," he whispered. It was Blackmore, who had crawled up behind me.

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"Germans up there ahead," I motioned to the woods.

"Yes, and Germans behind us," he added.

We were back of the German lines and surrounded. We might get out and we might not. Anyway, we could give 'em a hot time before they got us. We opened a sniping fire on every German we saw, and dropped them all around. Whether they were dead or only wounded, we never knew. The German snipers couldn't spot where our bullets were comin' from because of the heavy fire on all sides.

Besides my rifle I had my Colt automatic and my pistol. I hauled out the pistol and handed it over to Blackmore, so he'd have an even break with me.

"Better take this," I whispered. "You might be able to use it when you can't use your rifle."

But the Germans were retreating now, and my men were filterin' up through the woods.

"Where is your platoon, Corporal?" I asked Sullivan.

"I don't know, sir. Lost 'em in the woods."

More men were crawlin' up, and I was able to organize part of the company. We hurriedly dug in there hoping to get a little protection from the firing. The Germans had stopped shelling for a while because their own lines were in confusion, but now they cut loose with a heavy dose to make up for lost time. Rifle bullets were still poppin' all around, a murderous stream of machine-gun fire was mowing down the branches above us, shrapnel was bursting, and the steady roar of the big guns was

banging at our eardrums like ten boiler factories. We couldn't hold this position long without support.

I sent a runner back to the battalion commander for orders. There was no cover for us. Nor were there any supporting troops on either side of us. The major sent orders to drop back several hundred yards to the edge of the wood. We learned later how strongly the Germans had massed their troops up there. Our little outfit brought back prisoners from four different regiments.

So we crawled back to our old position. The German planes were coming over us. I took a crack at one with my rifle for good measure. They were giving all their attention, it seems, to the machine-gun company. They spotted the machine-gun horses and signaled the artillery. There was the screech of a shell, a clap of thunder, the screams from horses, and in another minute horses and mules and carts, and a half dozen men, were wiped clean out.

I reported to Major Davis when I got back. He asked me what I'd been doing to the Germans.

"I got a few."

"Yeah, I know you did," he said. Blackmore had been telling his buddies about my silencing the machine-gun nests and the major had heard about it.

The shelling never let up—even after the whole regiment had withdrawn to prepare for a big attack. We took to the shell holes on the far side of a knoll to wait for dark. A telephone line with about fifteen wires on it was running along the crest of that knoll. In less than five minutes not a wire or a post was left standing. The

wire was cut to smithereens; the posts were cut off by the shells the way a high-powered bullet would cut off a match.

A shell landed fifty feet away from us. A clod of earth as big as a house flew up and came down on two men who were in the next shell hole chewing the rag over a tin of corn willy. The argument stopped pronto. A half dozen of the rest of us crawled over to dig 'em out. We expected to find 'em in pieces, but they weren't even hurt, just stunned considerable. Their rifles had been hurled out of their hands, and the barrels twisted up like corkscrews.

We started back to our own fox hole. Another shell was coming. We heard its whine and dropped flat. Bang! square in a shell hole over to the right—a direct hit. A column of mud and rags, blood and brains and muscle, shot into the air and sprayed us from head to foot. There was nothin' more left of the two men who had been there than of a tomato when you throw it against a brick wall.

CHAPTER XX

THE END OF JOHNNIE PULCINO

Only a Handful Left out of the Whole Outfit—The Strange End of Sam Gowler—A Sniper Picks off Hans Nelson—They Blow Our Supply Dump Right off the Map.

ALONG in the late afternoon the shelling stopped. The war cry now was, "When do we eat?"

Somebody crawled into my shell hole. It was Epsten, the Y. M. C. A. man. Personally, I don't know much about "Y" men in general. I never saw much of them. But that chap was one who knew the smell of gunpowder. Wherever the doughboys went, he would be Johnny-on-the-spot.

"Want some chewing gum?" he asked. "It's all I have left. The chocolate's all gone."

Well, chewing gum wouldn't help an empty stomach much, but it kept your jaws busy and kidded your imagination. Somebody had broken into my pack where I had cached it when I went after the machine-gun nests, and so far as there being any rations left when I got back to it, there wasn't even a smell. I didn't mind so much losing my emergency rations, but that yellow-bellied son

of a sea cook, whoever he was, had make off with a jar of strawberry jam I'd been treasuring for two weeks.

I was chewin' away and trying not to think about food, when there was the rattle of a mule cart down behind us and sound of the mess sergeant's voice raised in what he called song.

> "The colonel got the Croix de Guerre,
> The son of a gun he wasn't there,
> Hinky, dinky, parley voo!"

We couldn't believe our ears.

Buhnke's round red face was comin' over the knoll like a rising sun. He lifted the gas-proof containers of food and then came over to me carrying something carefully. It was an apple pie! He held it out to me with a broad grin on his face.

"Where the hell——" Why, I hadn't seen an apple pie since I came to France. Nor did we ever find out where he rustled the apples.

"Reward for wipin' up the German army, Lieutenant," he said.

I don't think any medal I ever got pleased me half as much as that apple pie. I tried to thank him, but he was already on his way back to his cart. He climbed up, cursed a blue streak at the mule in the affectionate way he had, and started bumpin' off, still singing. He had got as far as the forty-third verse of "Hinky dinky" when the German artillery opened up. Those Heinies must have smelled that pie, and were trying to get even.

Bang! A shell hit a hundred feet in front of the mule

cart, and what little had been left of that stretch of road disappeared then and there. The mule took to the field on a dead lope, and Buhnke had all he could do hangin' on the cart. The last I saw of them they were disappearing over the knoll, with shells burstin' all around, and the fat sergeant doin' outside loops and half barrel rolls in the air as the cart bumped over the shell holes.

That lad Buhnke was the berries. The bullets could be whistlin' through his whiskers, but he'd always see to it we got good chow. He'd sent us up a meal of beefsteak and potatoes and gravy when I knew darn well a lot of the other outfits were lucky to get cold corn willy that night.

"Good chow in this outfit," said one new rookie between bites. "All we had back in training camp was slumgullion."

"What's slumgullion? How do you make it?"

"Make it, me eye! You don't make it, buddy," he explained. "It just accumulates."

We had a wonderful supply sergeant in our company, too. Alexander Ruddock, his name was, from Chester, Pennsylvania. And he was a fighter besides. When we made the advance that morning he had been left behind to care for the company equipment. Then he saw the tight fix the company was in and the number of wounded the litter bearers were bringing back to the dressin' station in the farmhouse on Ferme de Madeleine.

"Supplies be damned," he told his buddy. "I'm goin' to get in this fight."

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The burial of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington. Sergeant Samuel Woodfill is the second pallbearer on the left.

He grabbed his rifle and started for the German lines and the thick of it and stayed there till the order came to withdraw. He got back safe that time, but the Germans got him later—and in the last twenty-four hours of the war, at that. He had wiped up on two machine-gun nests during the American advance on November tenth when a sniper picked him off. He died a day or two later.

I was checking up on my company as we ate. There was only a handful left of the whole outfit.

"Where's Pulcino?" I asked. Johnnie had always stuck to me like a shadow.

The "Y" secretary told me. Pulcino had worked all morning going back and forth carrying wounded from the front lines to the temporary hospital they'd set up in the farmouse. In the afternoon, when the Germans sent over their big barrage of shells, he was curled up on the floor of the operating room catching a few winks. He never knew what hit him. A shell struck that corner of the house, killed Johnnie and the man on the operatin' table, without even scratching the two surgeons.

Sam Gowler was missin', too.

"Been sent back to the hospital," somebody told me. "Bullet got him through the lung."

Sam had been advancin' through a part of the woods that was grown up so thick with underbrush it was almost jungle. In his advance he almost bumped square into a German gun position with two .77's. He crept back and managed to collect a squad of men. They crawled up together, opened fire on the gunners, and

drove 'em off. Sam then kept on advancin' into the woods, dodgin' from tree to tree for protection. And it was just his rotten luck to pick out a tree where a German officer was hidin' on the other side. As he slid around the tree the Boche shoved his Luger into Sam's side and plugged him through the lung. But Fritz got his hardly a second later. One of our runners was just crawlin' up. As the German fired, the runner ticked him off with his .45, killed him so's he fell right over Sam. He and another private carried Lieutenant Sam back to the dressing station. His wound wasn't fatal. I heard later he even got well enough to get up and walk around the hospital. But he took cold doing that, and it turned to pneumonia. Sam cashed in his checks just before the Armistice.

And they'd got Nelson, too. Good old Hans! It was tough they had to get a swell guy like that. So the farewell note he'd wrote the afternoon before wasn't wasted, after all. I never knew who he was writing to. He didn't have any family—maybe there was a girl somewhere who meant something to Hans.

A little rookie who'd joined the company just before the drive told me how they got Nelson. The sarge had led his platoon forward until machine-gun fire held them up. Workin' up alone in advance of the platoon, he wiped out two machine-gun nests and had taken cover in a shell hole when the little rookie caught up with him and crawled down beside him.

"Another machine-gun nest," Nelson whispered. "Be ready to open fire with me when I spot the gunner."

Nelson was one of the finest riflemen I ever knew. He could have gone right on moppin' up those machine-gun nests if his luck had held. He had just given the signal to the other soldier and had his finger on the trigger of his rifle when a sniper up a tree discovered 'em and shot him through the heart. The rookie gave a leap into the bushes and managed to escape. They buried Nelson on the battlefield, and sent the D. S. C. to some relative they finally discovered.

Altogether, most of my company were missin' that night. Some had got lost and strayed into other outfits, some were prisoners, some wounded and shell-shocked. They had found Ritchey wanderin' around the firing line clear off his nut. I learned afterward that twelve of the men had been killed in action. Yazo, the Indian, was one of them. The Germans had sent him to his happy hunting ground. He was advancin' when a German machine gunner cut loose at him. The German thought he was playing possum when he dropped. He kept on firin' and simply riddled the Indian with bullets.

"When we picked him up to carry him in," the litter bearer told me, "the bullets dropped out of him like gravel."

After supper, orders came from Colonel Hawkins for me to round up the company and go back to carry up supplies. They had been brought up by truck as far as the drivers could go. We got the supplies—grenades, ammunition, machine guns, rifles, and rations—and crawled up with it in scattered deploy formation. The German guns were quiet. We dumped the supplies in

the woods beside the Cunel cemetery, and went back for another load.

"The supplies are cached just over the knoll," I told the outfit up there. "I think they should be camouflaged before daylight or the Germans will spot 'em."

We were on our way back, creepin' through the woods. Just as we reached the top of the knoll between Ferme de Madeleine and Cunel a German machine gunner opened up. He must have had good ears, because he certainly couldn't see us. There was a sound like a blacksnake whip crackin' past my ears. The bullets were strikin' the rocks right under our feet. There were flashes of fire all around us in the dark. It was nothin' but luck that not a man was hit.

As usual the German artillery had to horn in on the party. The only considerate thing about a shell is that it gives you warnin'. I heard the first screech comin', and blew my whistle. That was the signal for every man to drop in his tracks, whether under cover or not. If you hugged the ground mebbe you had a better chance of missin' the shrapnel. I slid head first into a shell hole, but it was only pint size, and my legs were stickin' out.

There was a sting in my left calf, and I jumped.

"Hit, Lieutenant?" the fellow next me asked.

I wiggled my leg. It seemed to be workin' all right.

"Nope, I guess not."

That was just another piece of luck. A small piece of the shrapnel had penetrated the legging, mud and all, and just grazed the skin. It dropped out when I went back and crawled down into a dugout to see what

In the piping days of peace,

had happened. If it had been a big piece it would have knocked me out on the spot. I thought once more of what Hightower had said about my luck and went to sleep down in the dugout. I thought it would be wonderful after the shell hole. It depends on what you call wonderful. It was just a choice between wakin' up to keep from drownin', or wakin' up to scratch.

Word came that night that we were to be relieved by the Third Division while we withdrew further and reorganized for attack. The snipers and machine gunners had been havin' a mighty wakeful time all that night—and makin' everybody else have one—and the artillery woke up as usual at dawn. It was a bright clear morning, and they were givin' an exhibition of plain and fancy shootin'.

The fellows up ahead didn't take my advice and camouflage that supply dump. So the Germans picked it out for the openin' number. In twenty minutes that dump was blown right off the map. Bandoleers of ammunition were draped over the tree tops forty feet away, and corn willy sprayed all over the landscape.

In between times they would give us some mustard gas for variety. They had it all figured out nicely. First a handful of shells to drive us into the fox holes, then a snootful of gas to drive us out. A piece of shrapnel sailed over to where our Y. M. C. A. chap was lyin' in a shell hole and stripped the flesh from both his legs. So it was back to base hospital for him.

There were a lot more casualties that day. I never did know how many, because I saw my last day of action

then and there. I couldn't carry on. Exposure in the rain had got me. I went to the battalion surgeon. He told me an operation I'd been postponing was necessary at once, so they shipped me back to the base hospital at Bordeaux.

The outfit carried on. The weather turned biting cold and then another drizzlin' rain set in. The next day, the fourteenth, the regiment re-formed and attacked over a battle field that was a sea of mud. The Germans greeted them with a barrage from their big guns all along the line. The Sixtieth Infantry was under steady fire from the artillery and machine guns, without sleep or rest for two days and nights. The Germans had thrown into the line against us their famous Twenty-eighth, their Flying Shock Division, which had all but held back the American advance at Belleau Wood in June.

We took Cunel and the Bois de Pultière that day, but at a terrific cost. The regiment had casualties of forty-four officers and over a thousand men. In one battalion only eleven sergeants were left, and in taking Cunel, Companies B and C lost half their strength in killed and wounded before they got through into the woods behind the town. It was some of the hottest fighting of the war, and I was missin' it. My only consolation was that I'd soon be back with the boys.

My old battalion was hard-pushed that day. Its fightin' strength was cut down so much that the litter bearers sent out to look for wounded forgot their orders and joined the fight to drive the Germans back and

hold the ground we had taken. The ambulance drivers who stayed on the job carried on in a storm of shelling. A shell exploded in front of an ambulance with a load of wounded, and a flying piece of steel broke the gasoline feed pipe. That driver didn't waste any time wonderin' what to do. He had his orderly drain the gas from the tank into his mess cup and pour it into the carburetor and kept right on by spurts till the ambulance got to a place of safety.

Colonel Hawkins was wounded in that drive, and Captain Haywood got it in the leg when he was leadin' C Company in the attack on the Bois de Pultière. He had picked up a German horse that strayed into our lines and was ridin' it along a strip of roadway. The captain was a big rawboned fellow and made a fine target astride that horse. A German sniper discovered him, but the moment he fired, the horse happened to r'ar up, and the captain got the bullet in the leg instead of the heart. He rolled off the horse to the ground. A private in his company was just crawlin' up with his rifle. He rushed over to the captain.

"Never mind me," said Haywood. "Get that sniper up in that tree."

"Where, where?" stuttered the private.

The captain didn't wait to draw a blue print. He grabbed the private's rifle himself, rested it across the fellow's shoulder when he found he couldn't steady himself standin' on his own good leg, and brought down the sniper.

They turned my company over to Lieutenant Horace

Tune from another outfit. They were in the fightin' all the rest of October, and on the first of November my old company, with a platoon of Haywood's company, battered back the Germans and captured and held the town of Cléry-le-Grand. The Germans left so quickly they didn't have a chance to move or destroy their supplies. Lieutenant Tune captured a flock of German tractors, a dump of coal, enough rye and hay to make our horses think Sherman was wrong, and a big supply of machine guns and ammunition. They gave him the D. S. C. for that show.

It was Captain Allworth who pulled off the next big stunt. He was a youngster and looked just like a boy, but an old-timer couldn't have shown more nerve. Commanding Company I, he had reached the Meuse River. Half his outfit had crossed over the Meuse canal when a German shell blew up the bridge. Without waitin' for the engineers to throw across another one, Allworth jumped into the canal and swam it with shells burstin' all around him. The rest of his men followed him up the slope, and with less than a hundred men under him he captured the enemy positions and took more than a hundred German prisoners. Crossin' the Meuse and establishin' a bridgehead under heavy fire was one of the stoutest achievements of the war, as far as the A. E. F. was concerned.

CHAPTER XXI

GOOD–BYE COOTIES, GOOD–BYE FRANCE

The Award of the Congressional Medal of Honor—Deloused for the Last Time.

WHEN the war ended and the rest of the lads in the A. E. F. were building bonfires and kissing the mademoiselles I was still having my temperature taken and eating barley gruel in a hospital. And there I stuck until the first of December. My regiment had been ordered into Luxembourg along with the Army of Occupation. But when the doctors said I was fit to go instructions came for me to stay at Bordeaux. They gave me the tame job of inspecting the clothing and equipment of troops embarking for home. The idea was to see to it that all cooties were left on the European side of the pond. One day word came that the Commander-in-Chief was coming to inspect our establishment. Everything was in readiness except that we hadn't any troops on hand to delouse. So we decided to improvise by drafting a bunch of volunteers to run through our cleaning mill —one chap for the shaving room, one for the fresh underwear room, and so on.

Three minutes before the hour announced for his visit and inspection everybody jumped in and acted as

though it was a busy day. The lad who had volunteered to let the barber operate on him wasn't as enthusiastic as he might have been because he'd already had one shave. But the barber was an ex-barroom bouncer, and once he got his victim in the chair he lathered and shaved him several times. Still General Pershing didn't arrive. Then the barber began cutting his victim's hair, and he kept right on snipping until the poor chap was nearly bald. This went on for an hour and still no inspection party. The same thing was happening all over the camp. The general finally arrived two days later.

Shortly after that a telegram came ordering me to report to G. H. Q., Chaumont. It mentioned that I was to be on hand at a certain time to receive the Congressional Medal of Honor. It didn't occur to me at the time to mention it to anyone and I simply asked for leave to go to General Headquarters. When I got there I found sixteen others on hand for the same event. On a cold winter afternoon we lined up in the quadrangle in front of the building where the Commander-in-Chief had his offices. The Headquarters Battalion was there acting as guard of honor and the band played. General Pershing came out with his staff, called the name of each man, read his citation to the troops and spectators who were gathered around, and then pinned on the Congressional Medal. I'll confess that I was in a bit of a daze. About all I can recall of his remarks was:

"This is the highest honor an American soldier can receive from his government. I am mighty proud of these men."

When he said that you could almost hear the heads and chests of the lot of us expanding. At any rate, to an old regular like myself it meant far more than I have the words to express.

Then the next day General Pershing sent cars to take all seventeen of us out to his château for lunch. It was a buffet luncheon and everybody from buck privates to General John J. Pershing himself seemed to be feeling tiptop and crackin' jokes. Up to this time I had been credited with some thirty years of service in Uncle Sam's army, but in all of my time I never saw so many generals' stars congregated under one roof. The room was swarming with generals—Liggett, Bullard, McAndrews, Summerall, Davis, Nolan, and maybe others. "Black Jack" himself was mingling with the crowd, looking every inch a soldier, just as he always does, and chatting with all the men he had decorated the previous day. This was the first time I'd met him since he was on the border during the Mexican disturbance. And I didn't see him again until the day we buried the Unknown Soldier at Arlington, when we met in the office of the Secretary of War.

After a few words with him another general approached.

"Well, I'm certainly proud to see you here," he began.

It was none other than Major General John Alexander, my old company C. O. back in the days when I served my first hitch in the Philippines, so long ago that it seemed as though it was in another life. Believe me,

I was glad to see him, and we had a fine chat about our old outfit and the times he had in the Islands.

"In all my time I never had a better company than that one," remarked the general.

"I don't know so much about that, sir," I replied, "but there wasn't a man with you in those days who wouldn't have gone to hell and back if you had said the word." Captain Alexander had always been my ideal of what an army officer ought to be. There never was a better.

After lunch they lined us up once more with General Pershing and his staff for a photograph. There was only one chap among the seventeen Medal of Honor men whom I had known before, and that was Allworth, of Company I of my regiment, the man who had swam the Meuse under fire.

He introduced me to another chap in the crowd who had negotiated the Meuse under somewhat similar circumstances just before the Armistice. He was Private Harold Johnson of the Three Hundred and Fifty-sixth Infantry. This chap swam it twice. He and another private, named Barklay, tried to swim the Meuse under terrific fire to do some reconnoitering. They got the information they were after and then started back. Barklay was taken with cramps and went down before Johnson could save him. Johnson was about ready to collapse himself when he saw his buddy go under for the last time. With a final effort he cursed the Boche through his teeth and somehow managed to fight his way to shore. At that luncheon with General Pershing

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I had a chat with another lad, a big, powerful fellow with snappy black eyes and jet-black hair. I'd heard that Kentucky drawl too many times not to recognize where it came from.

"You from Kentuck, buddy?" I asked.

There was no mistake about it. This fellow's name was Willy Sandlin, and he hailed from the mountains of Kentucky, a full two-day trip from the nearest railway line. He had joined up in the regular army as soon as he was of age, the same as I'd done. He was with the One Hundred and Thirty-second Infantry in the first day of the Argonne push and his section of the line was being held up by machine-gun fire. He noticed a narrow space between two enemy guns that wasn't raked by their fire. So, filling his pockets with hand grenades, he crawled and sidled along that strip of ground. Attacking the first nest with his grenades, he killed some of the gunners and then jumped right in among them to finish up the job with his bayonet. He did the same thing right over again with the second German machine-gun nest. And right away he tackled a third and put it out of commission. After that the American line continued its advance. Sandlin, although both wounded and gassed, came through all right. His regiment was part of the Thirty-third Division, which saw most of its action along the Meuse River. And of the sixteen of us decorated at Chaumont, five were from that division. Two of these had pulled off their shows on the same day as Sandlin. One of these was a big, blue-eyed, double-fisted, fightin' Irishman from Minnesota named Captain

George Mallon. And the other was his top sergeant, a Yiddish chap by the name of Sydney Gumpertz.

A thick fog caused Captain Mallon to get separated from most of his company. But he pushed right on with only nine men. This little band captured nine machine-gun outfits. Even then they didn't call it a day. They kept right on going until they reached a battery of big .155's. When they came upon it Mallon tried to shoot with his automatic, but it jammed. Now, no true Irishman ever gets caught without a weapon of some kind to fall back on. So he cut loose with his fists. With a leap he pounced on the nearest German and knocked him for a goal. Then before the German had stopped counting the pretty butterflies the rest of the gun crew had surrendered and the battery was in the hands of the Yanks.

A few minutes later Mallon bumped into his top sergeant, this Yid, Gumpertz. The Jew hadn't been exactly idle. He and his platoon had been going round and round with a lot of Germans at a notorious place called Dead Man's Hill. There they had captured four enemy machine guns under terrific fire and had taken fifty German prisoners. When that Jew top sergeant and his Irish captain began to compare notes they had a booty list that would delight the heart of any pirate. It ran something like this: One hundred prisoners, eleven machine guns, one anti-aircraft gun, and four 155-millimeter howitzers. It just shows what the Kikes and the Micks can do when they get together. I guess the Jew isn't such a washout as a fighter as some people think.

The other three fellows at Chaumont from that One Hundred and Thirty-second Infantry—all privates—had been mopping up machine-gun nests, too. Johannes Anderson had silenced a machine gun and brought back twenty-three prisoners lone-handed. Clayton Slack accounted for two German machine-gun nests and ten prisoners. Berger Loman—that's a pretty good German name itself—had chased the Boche gunners out of a machine-gun nest and then used their own weapon to assist them from the rear in their retreat.

Two other fellows were decorated from the Seventy-seventh and one of them was from the famous Lost Battalion. As you probably know, Colonel Whittlesey got the Medal of Honor, too, but not that day at Chaumont. I didn't see him until later on in Washington when we both were on hand for the burial of the Unknown Soldier. Then two weeks after that poor Whittlesey committed suicide by jumping overboard from a steamer on his way to Havana. I guess those four days when he and his men were surrounded by the Germans in the Argonne forest must have put too heavy a strain on him. At any rate, he cracked.

The Lost Battalion man who was with us at Chaumont was one of Whittlesey's officers, a Captain George McMurtry. He had a smashed shoulder and a smashed knee during the entire four days that the battalion was cut off. But he didn't let such trifles stand in the way of his doing his share of the fightin'. He rallied his men again and again and held off the Boche from his section

of the area where the battalion was isolated, and he kept holding it until reënforcements came through.

That day at Chaumont we talked about some of the unusual events of those last days of the war, and I particularly remember hearing about a chap named Tom Neibaur, a buck private from the Forty-second Division. On October seventeenth, during the Argonne drive, he was sent out on patrol. German machine-gun bullets got him in both legs. He couldn't walk, but he kept right on crawlin'. Lyin' flat on his stomach, he kept his automatic rifle spittin' bullets and managed to hold the Germans at bay. Four of them attacked him and in a hand-to-hand encounter he got the whole quartette. Then he captured eleven more prisoners and, still crawlin', he drove 'em back to the American lines at the point of his pistol.

Then there was a chap at Chaumont with us that day from my old regiment, the famous Ninth Infantry. It had been fighting with the Second Division. This bird had done more than his share in mopping up machine-gun nests in the Argonne. I asked him about a lot of my old pals of the Ninth, and he told me that nearly every one had been bumped off. All except Snelly, a private who used to be a regular guardhouse bum in the old days. That chap Snelly would get stone drunk, land in the mill, sober up, and get out, and then go and put on the same sort of show all over again. But the war straightened him out, he quit drink, and got to be top sergeant of my old company. It was hard to believe.

I don't know which of that crowd had done the

Woodfill, Major Dargue, and a young friend.

bravest thing, because bravery is a curious quality, but for downright stout-heartedness and guts I doffed my overseas cap to a corporal from the tank corps. He was in a tank with an officer when a shell knocked the top off of the turret. Half choked with gas from the shell, Corporal Call piled out of the tank and beat it for a shell hole thirty yards away. He noticed that his officer hadn't followed him. So he crawled back to the tank through exploding shells and machine-gun fire. He found the officer so seriously wounded he couldn't walk. So the corporal carried him over a mile, through a heavy barrage, to the rear lines.

The same day that happened there was another little show pulled off in the tank corps. The tanks had managed to reach their objective and then what did the infantry do but start running around in circles. The officer in charge of the tanks had to go back and pull 'em back and pat 'em on the back and then lead 'em to the ground he had taken. The Germans almost shot the ears off of him, but he did it. And that fellow was none other than an old Alaskan sourdough, Dan Pullen. Of course, he wasn't so old, either, because he hadn't been out of West Point very long. But Dan Pullen was from Skagway, Alaska, and when I heard this tale I exclaimed:

"Great guns! Dan Pullen! His mother cooked me the finest flapjacks in North America fourteen years ago when I was on my way into the Arctic!"

You bet it wasn't long before everybody in the A. E. F. had heard of Colonel Dan Pullen. Later on

they gave him the Distinguished Service Cross for what he had done at Bois-de-Cuisy, and it was General Pershing himself who said he wished he had a whole army of Dan Pullens.

Well, the whole gang at Chaumont had been through the Meuse-Argonne drive together, so we had plenty to talk about. Later on I happened to bump into the first chap to win the Medal of Honor in the World War. Then I met him also at the burial of the Unknown Soldier. He was a leatherneck sergeant by the name of Charley Hoffman and he had fought with the marines at Château-Thierry. At the time the marines were tackling Hill Number 142 Hoffman saw twelve Germans armed with half a dozen light portable machine guns. They were crawling right toward his outfit. Then Charley gave a yell to warn his buddies and lit right into those Heinies like a charging grizzly. He got two of them with his bayonet and the rest dropped their machine guns and beat it. If those enemy gunners had ever gotten into action at the point they were headed for they could have swept the whole hill and cleaned out the entire American force at that point.

A few days after leaving Chaumont I got orders to leave Bordeaux and join my old regiment in Luxembourg. I took the first train, and when I walked into Colonel Hawkins's office he bounced right out of his chair.

"Great guns, Woodfill, is the dead walking? Why, we heard that you had passed out."

"They used to say up in Alaska in the old days,

Colonel," I replied, "that the only way they'd ever get me would be by hanging. Mebbe there's something in it."

A few days after that my promotion to a captaincy came through. I was to be a temporary captain for the duration. They put me in command of Company F. But the Army of Occupation was a different job from the fighting game I had left when they invalided me out and sent me down to the hospital in Bordeaux. The sole topic of conversation now wasn't "When do we eat?" but "When do we sail for the States?" A letter came from my wife telling me that Mother was failing in health. "Tell Samuel I am proud of him," Mother had said. And that meant more than any decoration. I got back home only just in time to see her once more before she died.

They had the big international shoot at Le Mans while I was in Luxembourg. I came out ahead in the regimental preliminaries and Lieutenant Wolfe second. The two of us went up to represent the Sixtieth Infantry. I managed to bring back a bronze medal. I wasn't in my best shooting form at that time because the gas I'd picked up in the shell holes in the Argonne had affected my eyes. Then Wolfe and I took ten days' leave in order to knock around over Europe a bit and see what it was all about. A few of the things that interested me most were the submarine base at Bruges, where Edith Cavell was shot in Brussels, and Paris, of course. I suppose most of the doughboys would vote the Montmartre as the most interesting place in Paris. But for me, I liked the Hôtel des Invalides, with its enormous collection of

guns used by Napoleon. I also went through a place called the Louvre, but when I came out I admit I shook my head and admitted that I had a better eye for guns than for Mona Lisas. Naturally, we took in the cafés at night, but our bank rolls weren't quite fat enough to play that game successfully. I never was much good at cities, anyway, and I guess I don't feel at home there.

One day, a few weeks later, marching orders came for the U. S. A. We went by train to Brest, but they put us in regular passenger carriages this time and not in side-door pullmans. At Brest we went through the usual farewell-to-France ritual of being deloused for the last time and of saying good-bye to cooties, many of whom no doubt were wearing three gold stripes for eighteen months in action. Fumigation, shave, haircut, shower, new clothes, and then up the gangplank bound for home on the *Aquitania*.

EPILOGUE

WOODFILL *told me his story with color and with considerable enthusiasm, save on one point. He was taciturn and unwilling to speak about the honors that came to him. He told me of his getting the Congressional Medal of Honor, because it was the climax of his lifelong career as a soldier. But his story ended there so far as he was concerned.*

The much-coveted Congressional Medal, however, was but the beginning of a flood of honors. Three months later the French government decorated him with the Croix de Guerre with palm. He was stationed with the Army of Occupation in Luxembourg, and the cross was pinned on him by his divisional commander, General Ely. Just before he sailed from Brest an admiral of the French navy pinned the Legion of Honor on him with great formality in the lobby of the Grand Hotel at Brest and kissed him on both weather-beaten cheeks. In 1920 the Montenegrin government sent the Cross of Prince Danilo, First Class, to Fort Thomas, Kentucky, where Woodfill was stationed. It was presented to him by General Peter E. Traub, the commander who had led the Thirty-fifth Division in the attack on the famous Dead Man's Hill in the Argonne. Later on General Diaz of the Italian army, while on

an official visit to the United States, stopped off at Fort Thomas, just to decorate Woodfill with an Italian war decoration.

After his return home from the war Woodfill was mustered out, together with thousands of war-time officers. He could see no place in civilian life for himself. The old soldier had learned no profession, no manner of existence, save the army. The obvious course was for him to enlist and serve out the thirty years of service which would entitle him to a pension. So he joined up for another hitch, and was given his old rank of sergeant. And now, after heroism and glory in France, he was back in his old place, a top kick in a company of regulars. One might have thought that the army could have kept the war-time captain, who had distinguished himself so bravely and had been termed the ideal soldier. One would have thought his vast experience and his unusual ability would have resulted in his getting a permanent commission instead of being dropped back to his former berth as a sergeant. Woodfill did not complain. He was an army man to his boots, and whatever was the way in the army was right with him. Then, too, he realized the immense confusion that must go with the slowing up and scrapping of a giant emergency organization such as Uncle Sam had created. He knew that most men would be lost in the shuffle, and he expected that fate to be dealt out to him.

Woodfill remained very little known, even in army circles, until 1921, when the great ceremony of the Unknown Soldier was held. Among the pallbearers of

the Unknown were to be the three outstanding soldiers of the A. E. F. General Pershing was to select them. A committee reviewed three thousand citations, the records of three thousand men who had been honored during the war. From these they selected one hundred. General Pershing went over the hundred and picked three. One of the three was Sergeant York. Another was Colonel Whittlesey of the "Lost Battalion." Another was Samuel Woodfill. When Pershing came upon Woodfill's name on the list, he said:

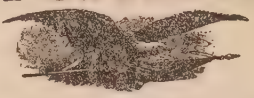
"Why, I've already selected that man as the outstanding soldier of the A. E. F."

Newspaper reporters got this statement. Few had heard of Woodfill. They went scurrying to look up the records.

The burial of the Unknown Soldier took place with great pomp. Wilson, Taft, and Harding were in the procession. Woodfill had his wife come on to Washington for the ceremony, and they received much attention. Senator Ernst of Kentucky led him to the White House and introduced him to the President. At a performance in the Belasco Theater Woodfill sat in the presidential box. One of the singers in the show spied him and told the audience about his valorous deeds. He got an ovation and was mobbed by admirers when he left the theater. Congress adjourned in his honor, he was banqueted by the members of the House and Senate, and was photographed with the President and the Secretary of War. In New York he was received with honors, and was the guest of Judge Philip J. McCook of the New

York Supreme Court, who had been an intelligence officer with the Fifth Division overseas and had been badly wounded. Judge McCook took him to see Marshal

THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA



TO ALL WHO SHALL SEE THESE PRESENTS, GREETING:
THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT
THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
PURSUANT TO ACT OF CONGRESS APPROVED JULY 9, 1918.
HAS AWARDED IN THE NAME OF CONGRESS TO

Samuel Woodfill

THE CONGRESSIONAL MEDAL OF HONOR
FOR
VALOR
ABOVE AND BEYOND THE CALL OF DUTY IN ACTION INVOLVING
ACTUAL CONFLICT WITH AN ENEMY OF THE UNITED STATES,
at Cunel, France, October 12, 1918, while serving as first lieutenant, Company M, 60th Infantry, 5th Division, American Expeditionary Forces.

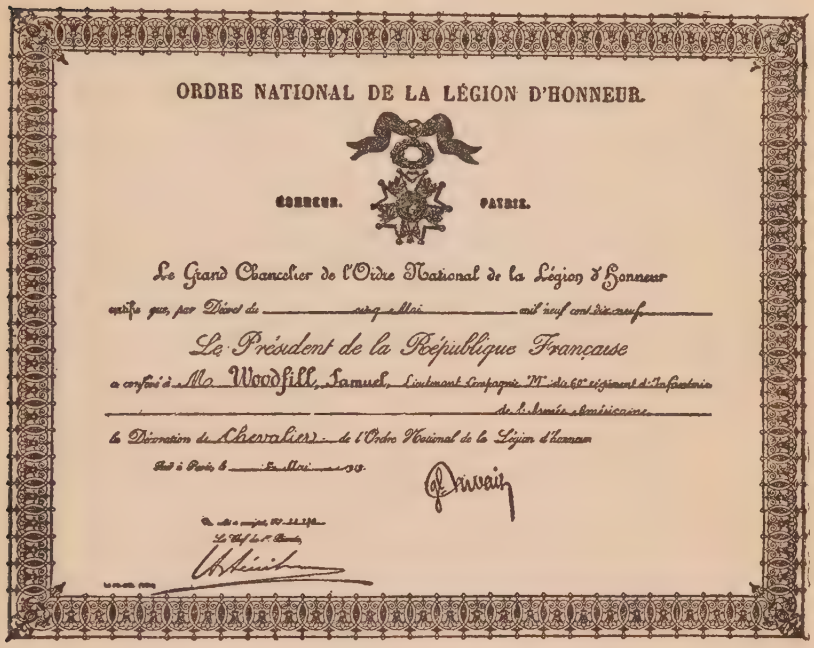
GIVEN UNDER MY HAND AT THE CITY OF WASHINGTON
THIS twenty-fifth DAY OF November, 1924.

RECORDED IN THE OFFICE OF
THE ADJUTANT GENERAL
Robert C. Davis
THE ADJUTANT GENERAL

John W. Weeks
SECRETARY OF WAR

Foch, then on a visit to America. The Marshal said he was happy to meet the first soldier of America, and Woodfill responded that he was happy to meet the first soldier of the world. He was received at the Stock Exchange, which suspended business for three minutes in his honor. A reception at the Hippodrome—Foch was there, and Woodfill had the right-hand box. Here

again he was greeted with deafening applause. The Fifth Division gave a banquet in his honor, and Chase painted his portrait.



ORDRE NATIONAL DE LA LÉGION D'HONNEUR.

HONNEUR. PATRIE.

Le Grand Chancelier de l'Ordre National de la Légion d'Honneur

certifie que, par Décret du ____ cinq Mai ____ mil neuf cent dix-neuf ____

Le Président de la République Française

a conféré à Mr Woodfill, Samuel, Lieutenant Compagnie "M" du 60e régiment d'Infanterie de l'Armée Américaine

la Décoration de Chevalier de l'Ordre National de la Légion d'Honneur

Fait à Paris, le ____ Cinq Mai ____ 19

A brief step into the glaring limelight, and Woodfill returned to his army post, a mere sergeant among other sergeants once more. His honors brought him a passing flash of fame—and that was all. A note was coming due on the farm that he and his wife had bought just before the war, and he had to get money to pay it. His commanding officer gave him three months' leave of absence

so that he could go to work as a day laborer on a dam that was being built below Fort Thomas. He needed the wages he could earn to pay on the mortgage. A note of this got into the Cincinnati newspapers. E. F. Albee, head of the Keith Circuit, saw it. He passed the word to his associates and they collected money in the Keith theaters—ten thousand dollars. With part of the money they paid off the mortgage and with the remainder they purchased an insurance policy.

In December of 1923 Woodfill, having served his allotted span of thirty years and more, was retired from the army with his pension. Since then he has been working his Indiana farm, back on the land and the furrowed soil he had left as a boy to go soldiering from the Arctic to the Argonne.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX

EXCERPTS FROM WAR DEPARTMENT RECORDS CONCERNING SAMUEL WOODFILL

MARKSMANSHIP—2nd Class, 1902.
REMARKS —Service, honest and faithful.
CHARACTER —Excellent.
(*Signed*) 2nd Lieut. E. H. TARBUTTON, 15th Infantry.

MARKSMANSHIP—1st Class, 1904, Sharpshooter, 1905, Expert Rifleman, 1906.
REMARKS —Service, honest and faithful.
CHARACTER —Excellent.
(*Signed*) Capt. RUSSELL C. LANGDON,
Commanding Company G.
Major E. H. PLUMMER, Commanding Post.

MARKSMANSHIP—Expert Rifleman, 1906, 1907.
REMARKS —A steady and reliable non-commissioned officer.
CHARACTER —Excellent, a model soldier.
(*Signed*) Capt. E. L. D. BRECKENRIDGE,
Commanding Company B.

MARKSMANSHIP—Expert Rifleman, 1907–1909.
REMARKS —Service, honest and faithful, no unauthorized absences.
CHARACTER —Excellent, a model soldier.
(*Signed*) Capt. E. D. WARFIELD, Commanding Post.

MARKSMANSHIP—Expert Rifleman, 1906–1913.
CHARACTER OF SERVICE—Honest and Faithful.
REMARKS —No unauthorized absences on record.
CHARACTER —Excellent.
(*Signed*) Col. C. J. CRANE, Commanding Post.

MARKSMANSHIP—Expert Rifleman, 1906–1915.
REMARKS —No A. W. O. L.
CHARACTER —Excellent.
(*Signed*) Col. A. CANNON, Commanding Post.

Decorated many times for heroism and valor while serving in France. Appointed successively to the rank of Second Lieutenant, First Lieutenant, and finally made a Captain, February 25, 1919, while with the Army of Occupation on the Rhine. Discharged October 31, 1919. Re-enlisted as a non-commissioned officer November 24, 1919.

Character—Excellent. Honest and faithful. No A. W. O. L. No absence from duty. Served entire enlistment with present organization. An excellent man and a born soldier.

(*Signed*) Capt. CHARLES FAMEL,
Commanding 30th Recruit Company.

Col. PETER E. TRAUB,
Commanding Post, Fort Thomas, Kentucky.

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WOODFILL CITATION FOR THE CONGRESSIONAL MEDAL OF HONOR

SAMUEL WOODFILL, first lieutenant 60th Infantry. For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty in action with the enemy at Cunel, France, October 12, 1918. While he was leading his company against the enemy his line came under heavy machine-gun fire, which threatened to hold up the advance. Followed by two soldiers at twenty-five yards this officer went out ahead of his first line towards a machine-gun nest and worked his way around its flank, leaving the two soldiers in front. When he got within ten yards of the gun it ceased firing, and four of the enemy appeared, three of whom were shot by Lieutenant Woodfill. The fourth, an officer, rushed at Lieutenant Woodfill, who attempted to club the officer with his rifle. After a hand to hand struggle, Lieutenant Woodfill killed the officer with his pistol. His company thereupon continued to advance until shortly afterwards another machine-gun nest was encountered. Calling to his men to follow, Lieutenant Woodfill rushed ahead of his line in the face of heavy fire from the nest, and when several of the enemy appeared above the nest, he shot them, capturing three other members of the crew and silencing the gun. A few minutes later this officer, for the third time demonstrated conspicuous daring by charging another machine-gun position, killing five men in one machine-gun pit with his rifle. He then drew his revolver and started to jump into the pit when two other gunners only a few yards away turned their gun on him. Failing to kill them with his revolver, he grabbed a pick lying near by and killed both of them. Inspired with exceptional courage displayed by this officer, his men pressed on to their objective under severe shell and machine-gun fire.

By order of the Secretary of War:

PEYTON C. MARCH,
General, Chief of Staff.

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